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[UNCLE AND NEPHEW.]

THE LOST CORONET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"One Sparkle of Gold," "Evelyn's Plot," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XI.

Mindless of dangers hovering round he lies,
Insensible to every outward ill,
Yet off his bosom heaves with rooding throes,
And oft big tears adown his wan cheeks trill.

"THERE, that will do. Leave me now, Perkins. What are you stopping for, man? I hate to be watched like a lunatic or a child. I want those books fetched from Walford, and you will not have time unless you go off directly. Go at once, I say."

The speaker was a wasted, haggard-looking man of some seventy or more years of age.

His whole appearance indicated extreme bodily weakness and exhaustion of the life springs that supply the drain on strength and health that age brings with it.

The very tissues of the skin seemed dried into parched, leather-like insensibility, and the bones were scarcely more hidden in their outline than a skeleton's frame.

But in strange contrast was the undimmed fire of the dark eyes, that pierced the objects on which its gaze was fixed, with as keen a penetration and sharp intelligence as if twenty less years and a life less of sorrow and passion had passed before their undimmed vision.

Perkins stood his ground with undismayed obstinacy.

"It's not right, Mr. Freshfield, sir. You're not fit to be left alone, say what you will, and Janet is too far off to be of any use, and Betsy is out milking the cow. I'd rather stay till she comes in, sir."

The old man grasped the gold-headed cane that stood constantly at his side as a support in his difficult locomotion, and shook it with impotent passion at the contumacious domestic.

"I'd like to know who is responsible for my safety except myself, you idiot," he roared, in a voice that was as inconsistent with his emaciated frame as the

strength of his vision: "And, what's more, if you dare to disobey me you'll see who's master, feeble as I am, for you shouldn't stay another day in the house, I promise you, if I were found dead in it myself to-morrow."

As Perkins had a tolerably correct idea that such a threat was not quite so meaningless as it might appear to a stranger to his master's stern imperiousness of nature, he reluctantly departed on his errand, after leaving strict injunctions with the half-deaf cook to "look after master a bit" while he was away.

But, before he had quite completed his lingering preparations, Rashleigh Freshfield had well nigh forgotten his absence.

The old man's eyes were fixed on the large, well-kept lawn and terrace that stretched out from the French window, in which his chair was placed, and beyond which a fair prospect of wood, and verdant fields, and hill and dale extended in rare beauty and luxuriance.

In truth, the secluded village of Rinslip, where that large, desolate mansion was situate, might be seventy instead of seventeen miles from the great metropolis for all purposes either of retirement or rural tastes.

The hermit-like invalid in the lonely retreat he had chosen ran little risk of contact with a world he had learned to hate.

He gazed on a fair spring landscape that might well bring gentle thoughts and softened hopes to the brain of him who watched its beauty.

But Rashleigh Freshfield's furrowed brow only contracted into deeper, ridge-like lines as he sat with eyes bent on perhaps rather the dark picture of the past than the smiling brightness of the sunset hour.

The shadows that gradually obscured the fading light could scarcely cast a deeper gloom over his seared heart than had long reigned in its depths.

But as the sun disappeared, and the gray evening clouds shaded strangely and fitfully the paths and lanes of the rambling, well-wooded grounds,

there came a more permanent and defined shadow on the broad path that like a terrace spread before the house, then a figure darkened the window with a rapidly passing obscurity.

The next instant a hand was laid on the handle of the French window, and a man stepped cautiously into the room, closing the glass door behind him as he stood within the apartment, facing the old man who was its sole tenant.

Mr. Freshfield did not call out or stir. For a moment he had perhaps fancied it was his servant returned from his errand.

Then before he had time to give what would in truth have been a useless alarm his face showed in the horrified recoil of its expression that he recognized and hated the intruder.

"You here, Jonas Freshfield?" he said, sternly. "How dare you enter my presence again? Hence, boy, hence, or you shall pay the forfeit that you so richly deserve. Leave my sight, or you know the penalty."

But Jonas coolly seated himself in a chair exactly opposite to his enraged and involuntary host with an air the very reverse of obedience to the hoarse mandate.

"Excuse me, uncle," he said, carelessly, "but there are two little mistakes in your pleasant welcome that had better be at once corrected. In the first place, the name I agreed to bear in deference to some peculiar fancy of yours is Dawes, and not my patronymic of Freshfield, honourable as the latter appellation no doubt is. Next, I may as well remind you that a man of thirty-three is neither to be treated as nor called a 'boy.' As to obeying your inhospitable injunction I have come too far not to finish the business that brought me, and, in plain English, I shall stay here till it suits me to go. You understand, uncle?"

The old man shivered with the uncontrollable weakness of age and infirmity under his nephew's hard sarcasm, but the indomitable spirit was strong within him still, and he replied, haughtily:

"I do know and understand you, Jonas. The



crime that you committed is fresh in my memory, and if it was pardoned, or rather condoned, it was simply because you bore my name, and because your father and I came of the same blood and were nourished at the same breast. But I will endure no outrage at your hands, and if you drive me too far you shall find that I am able and determined to suffer everything, even a stained name, to punish your disgraceful crime. Remember, I still have the power—still hold the proofs of your guilt."

"Then there may be two opinions about that," said Jonas, lightly. "I believe for once that I might bid you defiance, my amiable uncle. Just now, for instance, what is to prevent me from working out my will and taking by force what I would fain accept as a boon from your hands? There is no one to protect you, no one to witness, no one to prevent such a deed."

Rashleigh Freshfield's thin blood did perhaps run cold in his veins at the moment; but the next his eyes flashed furiously on the hardened speaker of the threat.

"Abandoned villain that you are! I cannot believe it of you, Jonas. You dare not shed the blood of your father's brother. His spectre would haunt you night and day. The gold you would steal like a felon would burn in your touch and sting you like a viper to the heart. Man, I defy you! I have not long to live. If you shorten my days the sin will be on you for time and eternity."

There was a dignity in the old man's calm manner that fairly cowed the hardened villain who held to all appearance that frail life in his power.

"Tut, tut, uncle," he said. "Don't go off on stilts. There is no blood in the case. It's gold I want, and I know pretty well where to find it, but I'd rather take it with your good will than without it. Besides, you haven't heard the reason that brought me here to-day. Uncle Rashleigh, I am going to be married, and I want you to do the handsome thing to start me off in life."

Rashleigh Freshfield sneered scornfully. "Married! and to whom? Some wretched, ruined daughter of shame who will tolerate your crimes as a cover to her own degradation. No, Jonas, no. Not one gold piece shall change from my hands to yours unless stained with my blood."

"Wrong again, Uncle Rashleigh. It's a girl whom a duke wouldn't be ashamed of as his wife. And, as to shame, why, you might as well talk of the sun coming down, stained with pitch, as dream of that innocent creature even knowing the very name. Uncle, you're more than an idiot to talk of what you don't understand," he returned, angrily.

"And you worse than a villain if your words have a grain of truth in them," was the bitter retort. "Do you suppose I would be accessory in delivering a spotless lamb to a black, ravening wolf? Never! I tell you I will die before you shall even touch my gold."

"Then you shut out all chance of reformation to your nearest of kin?" asked Jonas, in a softer tone. "You do not give him that outlet from his degradation which your useless dross could open. I am speaking truth, brother of my father. The bride I have chosen would well nigh bring back a fiend from the other region to an angel's mind. She is fair, and good, and pure as the noblest of the land. I love her, and, if you will give me back my rights, she shall be as a daughter to you in your old age."

The old man shook his head scornfully. "Jonas, dare you swear that she loves you, or has the most distant idea of marrying such an outcast as yourself? Nay, mark me, I shall test your words, and, if you perjure yourself, all shall be brought to light which has been so long hidden. Answer me, as you hope to escape the gallows; that will be the best argument," he returned, with a bitter, hoarse chuckle in his throat, rather like the rattle of one in the throes of death than the laugh of a human being.

"She'll consent, I'll answer for it," was the evasive answer. "Her father has offered her to me, and it will be a queer thing if she should escape from the cage without it is to fly into mine. So all you have to do is to gild the wires, uncle, and that you must and shall do, or I'll help myself to the lacquering," he said, fiercely, glancing around.

"You dare not. It would be sacrilege!" shrieked the old man, frantically brandishing the stick he held.

"Jonas, my malediction shall rest on you if you lift your hand against me, and without my blood stains the fingers which grasp my wealth it shall never be yours."

He rose as he spoke, and stood firmly before the astonished, awe-stricken man.

Like a skeleton risen from its dark tomb was that wasted, gaunt form, inspired for the moment with unnatural energy and power.

The bony arms raised the cane that was meant to support their feebleness. The dark eyes blazed like furnace coals, while two flaming spots sat on

the ashen cheeks, and the wasted, fleshless form raised itself erect to oppose the advance of the daring intruder on the forbidden ground.

Even Jonas quailed before the spectre-like vision. He dared not lift his hand against that frail yet awe-striking form, and his next words were sullen and threatening but with a touch of submission in their bitterness.

"Hark ye, uncle. This is all very good stage acting, but it won't do for my needs. And, I give you fair notice, I'm not to be bullied or trifled with like a beggar at your gates. The money I will have, and it is only for you to say how. By fair means or foul I intend to claim my own."

Rashleigh Freshfield sank down on the chair from which he had risen by an almost supernatural effort. His strength was well nigh exhausted, but not so the iron will, the imperious spirit.

"Never!" he gasped, "never! Away! lest I bring down Heaven's vengeance upon your head. Hark!"

Even as he spoke there was a sudden flash of forked lightning, illuminating the rapidly deepening gloom of the sky, and a heavy roll of thunder shook the very building to its centre.

Jonas was no coward, but he retained sufficient touch of human feeling to shrink beneath the strange coincidence, and the hand which had been involuntarily lifted against the old man sank in half-paralyzed numbness at his side.

"Hence, hence," gasped his uncle, hoarsely, the foam playing on his lips and choking his utterance.

Another moment might be his last.

Jonas paused for a second to weigh the chances of such a catastrophe. But the terrible visions of detection, suspicion, almost certain conviction of a fatal crime, dazzled his very senses.

He would risk the penalty of murder, even though innocent of the actual deed, were he to fulfil his threat, and slowly, stealthily, like one walking in a dream, he glided from the room and along the silent terrace, starting at every flash of light that revealed dark objects, which wore the forms of human beings to his guilty senses.

Long ere he reached the low side gate by which he had obtained an entrance to the house, Rashleigh Freshfield was lying back in his chair, rigid, white, with eyes fixed and lips parted as if the spirit had passed away from its fragile tenement.

CHAPTER XII.

*Thy gentle flow of gullible joys
On fools and villains ne'er descend;
In vain for thee the tyrant sighs,
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.*

"SAINTS and angels! what a suffocating crush!" exclaimed Lady Alice Vernon, a lively little ambassador, as she hung on Lord Hartford's arm in one of the "receptions" that a fascinating premier's wife made so popular. "Is any royalty here to-night? We English are so charmingly *bête* in our way of displaying our loyalty by staring its object out of countenance, and risking death by suffocation into the bargain."

"You are terribly severe, Lady Alice," replied the marquis, quickly leading the irate little ambassador into the group she criticized; "but this time your strictures are undeserved. There is only a queen of beauty here to-night to endure the pains and penalties you describe, and, besides her real attractions, there is a singular romance attached to her story that may well excuse the vulgarity of a 'stare.' Look for yourself," he whispered, in a lower tone, as the throng suddenly opened and a young girl emerged from it with the haughty air of a conqueror weary of his triumph and disdaining the homage he demanded.

"She is magnificent, I acknowledge," replied Lady Alice, seating herself in the recess Estelle had just left, "but not winning, not fascinating, not one to draw crowds to her feet. Who is she, marquis, and what is the romance?"

"Only that a month ago the 'beauty' you confess that fair young countess to be was presented to her Gracious Majesty as simple Miss De Vesce, a sort of satellite of her heiress cousin, Lady Mont Sorell. But the planet was only a shooting star, and that luminary who is now dazzling the world of fashion is safely fixed and permanent in the ascendant."

"For Heaven's sake, do speak rather less astrologically, duke. Being interpreted into earthly parlance, how did the transformation come about?" cried the ambassador, lifting up her hands in playful horror.

"Being interpreted then, Miss De Vesce became Countess of Mont Sorell, to which dignity she was next heiress, simply because the young girl who had been passed off as such turned out to be base coin in plain English, a supposititious child, whose no child had been in existence. *Voilà* the mystery."

The fair though *passé* lady's piquant features wore an unusual earnestness as she listened.

"Was she pretty, my lord?"

"Beautiful."

"Did she betray low birth?" asked the long-descended daughter of the ancient race of Vernon.

"She was one of the most refined creatures I ever saw," was the quiet reply.

"Poor girl. If I were a man I know what I would do," exclaimed Lady Alice, eagerly.

"Then I am sure it can only be necessary to commission some one who is fortunate enough to be of that noble sex to carry out your commands," returned the marquis, gravely. "What is it your pleasure should be done in this remarkable case?"

"Do? Why, I would marry her, poor girl!" said the ambassador, with a little imperious nod of her graceful head.

The marquis shrugged his shoulders.

"Pardon me, fair lady, you are scarcely serious," he returned, coolly. "The fact of having once worn a coronet does not make her exactly a fit bride for an English nobleman. Even the *fiancé* could not swallow the bitter dose of a terrific father and plebeian birth, though of course sweetened by love and—"

"Honour," interrupted the lady, impatiently. "Do you really mean that any man who had chosen her when she believed herself a nobly born heiress discarded her in her bitter sorrow and disgrace?"

"Even so. Lord Quentin Oliphant had, I presume, a sort of vested interest in the title and estates, for he has apparently transferred his homage to the new countess. 'The king is dead—long live the king,' is evidently Oliphant's motto."

Lady Alice's eyes followed the direction indicated by the cynical marquis.

Estelle was standing near a harp, which she was evidently being pressed to touch, her splendid figure displayed to the greatest advantage by the graceful, slightly bending attitude she had assumed, her dark hair blazing with skillfully placed jewels, and her eyes flashing with the intoxication of triumph.

"Has she no single vestige of woman's sympathy?" she asked, indignantly, "no passing thought of that suffering, unfortunate girl? Well, if the lover's heart can be so treacherous and cold there is little wonder that the cousin's brain is turned by the sudden leap to the giddy height. But, mark me, my lord, the time may come when the poor outcast will be avenged."

"Are you a soothsayer, fair lady, as well as most irresistible queen?" smiled Lord Hartford, half amazed at his companion's enthusiasm.

"Yes, where the heart is concerned," she replied, with an answering smile. "But I forget I am talking to a cold, reasonable Englishman," she added, with a slight elevation of her eyebrows. "You look all impatient to join the chorus of compliments yourself when the ballad is over," she continued, contemptuously. "Ah, if you did but know what music really is! and, wrapping herself in her splendid Oriental scarf, she sank back in the cushioned fauteuil and waved a playful adieu to her hesitating companion."

Lady Alice was quick in her discernment. Lord Hartford, almost against his own will, was attracted by that splendid *débutante*, and perhaps piqued by the cool appearance of his whilome chum, Lord Quentin.

"It's a bore to see a fellow walk over the course like that," he thought as he approached the harp. "I'll wager a year's rent-roll I can make him quake in his shoes if I enter the lists. At any rate it will stir me up a bit. It's all so confoundingly slow for a fellow like me, who can pick up hands if not hearts like mushrooms in a marsh, and about as well worth the trouble. There may be a little excitement here."

These reflections passed through the brain of the incipient duke while Estelle's song was progressing, and before she had finished his resolution was taken.

It was apparently a light and trifling fancy—a pardonable vanity that thus influenced the heir of the rich coronet of St. Maur.

Yet, in the deliberation of those few moments, on an ordinary social gratification hung the fate of more than the parties immediately concerned, and the destiny of the innocent and the guilty was affected by the vanity and ennuï of the spoiled son of fortune.

"Lady Mont Sorell, there was but one drawback to that enchanting song," he murmured as he pushed eagerly forward to lead the fair vocalist from the instrument.

"Indeed," replied Estelle, archly, "I am not at all surprised to know that it had defects, but exceedingly so to hear of them, and from you, my lord."

"Why, do you suppose I am incapable of appreciating such a performance?" he returned.

"No, but it is very rare to find any one courageous enough to tell the truth," she replied. "It is perfectly refreshing, especially when censure does not aff-ct me," she added, rather scornfully.

"May I make another charge," he whispered, laughingly, "that Lady Mont Sorell's discernment is hardly equal to her musical powers, or she could never have dreamed I could find fault with such a performance?"

"But you spoke of a drawback," she returned, hesitatingly.

"Yes, the presence of others. Could I listen to that song alone, and undisturbed, it would be simply enchantment."

"It would scarcely need a witch's wand to procure such a simple gratification," said Estelle, with an irrepressible gleam of proud exultation in her face, albeit slightly turned from her companion.

"Dare I interpret such words into a gracious permission to intrude on your more private hours?" he murmured, softly. "Lady Mont Sorell, you can scarcely guess the hopes you are kindling. It is a privilege I have longed for ever since that first glimpse I caught of you on that never-to-be-forgotten day."

"You forget I have a maternal guardian to consult," she returned, smiling. "It is not for me just yet to choose the *habits* of my own house."

"It is enough if I am armed with your permission," he said, eagerly. "I have little fear of winning that of the Lady Claud."

"Estelle, your mother is asking for you. Let me take you to her sofa," said a voice, in accents of unmistakable irritation, and Lord Quentin almost rudely pushed in between the speakers.

"Be so good, Lord Quentin, as to tell Lady Claud that Lady Mont Sorell is not quite ready to leave," returned Estelle, haughtily. "It is not my pleasure to be hurried away like a school-girl from the part of the rooms which I prefer."

A covert smile appeared on the lips of the young marquise as he stood easily behind the girl's chair, waiting the conclusion of the little skirmish.

"If Lord Quentin is not bent on distinguishing himself as an extremely promising Queen's messenger, I would suggest that it would be better not to risk the destruction of ladies' trains and gentlemen's tempers by such an impetuous career as he delivers his return message."

Quentin's hand moved suspiciously, and a gust of gloomy passion contracted his features for a moment; but Estelle's warning look silenced any retort, and he strode away, with a dark and boiling resentment in his breast that he too richly deserved as its just torment.

"A remarkably under-bred person that, to have any pretensions to gentle birth and breeding," commented the marquise, surveying his retreating figure with a supercilious smile. "You gave him a severe rebuke for his impertinence, Lady Mont Sorell. Even the one solely privileged to use your romantic and most appropriate name would scarcely venture to make such familiar mention of so sacred a talisman, and I dare not entertain the despairing belief that the distinction has been bestowed upon him, fair *reine des salons*."

Estelle hesitated.

Her pride whispered that the tone of this new and eligible admirer was too confident, too familiar, for maiden dignity to encourage. But the long-coveted prize of mamma's and maidens seemed in her grasp; the adamant heart was touched at last, and the conquest would make her triumph too glittering for sober contemplation. An heiress countess, a *débutante*, and the chosen bride of the greatest match in England, formed a combination of distinctions that would place the whole world at her feet, and Estelle was scarcely likely to stop short of the summit of her ambition.

"Certainly not," was the reply that sealed more surely than she was aware her fate. "Lord Quentin Oliphant is an old friend, and before the late untoward exposure I considered him as a future relative. If he has the bad taste to still presume on the past I shall know how to check impertinence in him—or any one," came with half-irrepressible haughtiness from the beautiful lips.

The marquise was about to reply when the words were checked by the approach of Lady Claud De Vesci, leaning on the arm of the subject of their discussion.

"Estelle, my love, I must beg you to forgive my urging you to go at once," said the gentle mother, deprecatingly. "But I have a frightful headache, and the glare and noise will make me faint if I stay much longer."

"It is most overpowering," interposed Lord Hartford. "I never can see the object of people endangering the lives of their friends and acquaintances by these plebeian crush mobs. An illumination crowd is actually envious to this. Permit me to escort you to your carriage, Lady Claud," he added, offering his arm to the mother, and thus leaving the lovely countess to Quentin's share with a sublime

self-confidence more mortifying to his lordship than the keenest competition for pre-eminence.

"Estelle, what have I done to deserve this?" asked Quentin, passionately, as he drew the girl's arm within his. "It is maddening to see you prefer that insolent puppy to one whom you have, at least, encouraged in assuming the right to the first place in your attentions—at your side."

"Which you will most assuredly forfeit if you presume upon it, Lord Quentin," returned Estelle, coldly. "I have pledged myself to nothing, and I certainly am not likely to trust you too implicitly after your fickleness to Pauline."

He started as if a dagger had pricked him at the low-spoken name that, to say the truth, he strove to banish from his very thoughts.

"You are cruel—unjust!" he whispered. "Estelle, you know that I was vanquished by your power long before the occurrence of that wretched episode which gave me my freedom. Do not taunt me with the weakness you occasioned."

There was a tremulousness in his voice that she could not doubt, and she did not wish to crush down his hopes utterly till her own wavering doubts were fully dispelled.

"You must give me time, Quentin," she said, more gently, "and not annoy me by what compromises my position, before I choose to announce, or even show, my resolve."

A penitent pressure of her hand was the sole reply as they reached the carriage.

But Quentin's self-command was sorely tried when he heard the marquise say, carelessly:

"I shall have the honour of inquiring as to your health to-morrow, Lady Claud," and saw Estelle's bright smile and gracious bow as she bade his aspiring rival good-night.

There was little interchange of ideas between the countess and her companion as they returned to their home. The delicate mother and the haughty daughter had scarcely one sentiment in accord.

Estelle's cold lips carelessly touched those of Lady Claud ere she passed up the staircase to her own apartments.

"You here, Ruth!" she said, angrily, as her eyes fell upon the tall figure of the self-imposed inmate of her household.

"Certainly. I bade Marie go to bed. She was worn out, poor girl. I told her I could perform her duties," returned the woman, calmly.

"She was insolent to take any commands but mine. I shall dismiss her if it occurs again," said Estelle, angrily.

"Why should you object to my services, my countess?" returned Ruth, coolly. "These hands have many a time disrobed your baby form. It was my fancy to repeat the service to your lovely womanhood. Perhaps I might even claim the office on your bridal morn. Would you say me nay, fair Estelle?"

"Pray do not worry me with such nonsense to-night. I am tired and had rather go to bed than listen to foolish fancies, my good woman. I have not yet fixed on my bridegroom. Time enough to speak of your silly romance when that is done."

"But I have decided on the future husband of my nursing," said Ruth, coolly. "It is my fancy that you should occupy in all things that important place, and crash her to the very dust by your superiority to her usurping claims. You must wed her suitor, my countess, the Lord Quentin; that would break her proud heart."

"Ruth, you are mad to dare to utter such insolent presumption to me!" exclaimed the girl, bitterly. "One more such offence, and you shall not remain another hour in my household."

There was a peculiar smile on the woman's lips as she replied:

"I beg your pardon, my lady; I will keep within my positive rights, which it may be as dangerous for you to infringe as for me. There are two to every quarrel; two sides to every question, my lady, and my zeal perhaps outran my prudence in this case."

CHAPTER XIII.

When shall my soul in silent peace
Resign life's joyless day,
My weary heart its throbbing cease,
Cold, mouldering in the clay?

PAULINE was sitting in the miserable apartment to which she had been so strangely consigned, and which had already received an air of refinement from her sweet, womanly tastes.

The furniture, scanty and shabby as it was, was arranged with the utmost care and neatness of which it was capable.

The unwonted cleanliness of all around was in itself a change that spoke of a new and graceful influence in that once squalid chamber. The brightness of such scrupulousness, the feminine implements of work

that lay on the table, and the preparations for the afternoon meal which were arranged on the board that served as a kind of sideboard, to relieve the small Pembroke table that stood near the fire, all gave that nameless aspect of home comfort which may be absent from the most luxurious abode.

It was strange that she, the gentle daughter of wealth and luxury, accustomed from infancy to a crowd of domestics ready to anticipate her every wish, attend to her every word, could have divined the necessities and performed the duties of that humble abode.

But so it was.

Pauline's delicate hands were taught by her noble sense of right to minister to her repulsive father's wants, to lure him by the greater comfort of his home, and to banish that debasing squalor and disorder which in themselves offend the purity of a delicate nature.

Her day's toil was over, and the whilome countess sat down in the Windsor chair that was the most comfortable seat in that poorly furnished room, weary and heart-sick, yet with a strange sense of mockery as she compared her former self with the humble household drudge into which the potted, graceful heiress had abruptly sunk.

It was like a dream, that luxurious elegance of furniture and attire, that crowd of domestics and equipages awaiting her slightest word or look; and a faint, bitter smile came over the sweet lips as she glanced at her simple costume and the surroundings of her abode.

But a step on the stairs roused her from her reverie, and she hastily brushed away the unbidden tears from her beautiful eyes as she prepared to meet, as she supposed, the advent of her dreaded father. But instead of the burly, square form of the whilome sailor the spare and more youthful figure of Jonas Dawes coolly entered the room and advanced towards her.

"Good-evening, Miss Lovett," he said, extending his thin, bony hand towards her, and grasping her small, reluctant fingers with almost a painful pressure in his own. "I hope you are beginning to feel more at home in your new abode. It is not a very cheerful one, I must say; but I dare say it will not be for long."

"I am perfectly content, Mr. Dawes," she replied, with a dignity that was scarcely natural to her sweet, childlike innocence. "I am sorry to say that my father is from home, and I do not expect him for some little time," she added, still standing before the seat from which she had risen with a cold courtesy that should have counselled retreat.

"I am very glad to hear it," was the cool reply as Jonas cast himself into the chair that was recently occupied by Nicholas himself. "I came to see you, not him, and I want to have a talk with you that a third person might interrupt, you see, my pretty Pauline."

The girl shrank back with a proud indignation flashing from every feature.

"My father would surely not tolerate insult to his child, Mr. Dawes, and I should be sorry to be discourteous to his friends; but I must beg that you will leave this room until he returns, or I shall be obliged to seek protection in my own chamber."

"Tut, tut, foolish girl! You will soon know better than that," laughed Jonas, harshly. "I am not quite so bad as I seem, perhaps, and I promise you I won't offer you any insult; only talk a little common sense, that's all. But I must trouble you to remain quiet, or else some more unpleasant consequences than I care to contemplate might happen. Just sit down, there's a dear girl, and we'll soon understand each other."

Poor Pauline! The fiery spirit that might have better become a long line of ancestors than her humble birth was flaming in her fair cheeks and lovely eyes. But she saw that resistance would but lead to more degrading altercation, and she quietly placed herself on her chair in a cold, dignified attitude of forced attention which was more daunting than revolt. Even Jonas seemed awed as he looked at her refined, delicate features and graceful form that shrank with involuntary repulsion from the very slightest contact with his enforced presence.

"Pray, Miss Lovett," he began, hesitatingly, "has your father given you any idea of his plans for you?"

"None; except the usual duties of a daughter," she said, fearfully, "to make her father's home comfortable, so far as it is in her power. Is he not satisfied?" she added, questioningly.

"If he is not he ought to be; but," ejaculated Jonas, fiercely, "but that's not to the point, Miss Pauline. You know that girls expect to be married, and their fathers naturally wish it; and—and—Mr. Lovett has chosen me as your future husband, and I will do my best to make you happy, pretty one."

Pauline sprang to her feet, with the startled terror

of a deer who sees the pursuers surrounding her on every side.

There was a mingling of horror, incredulity, and indignation in the look succeeding that first stormy affright which galled even the hardened Jonas to the very quick.

"I am bound to believe you are serious," she gasped out, at length; "but you must never speak of such a monstrous idea more. It is impossible."

"Pray why?" asked Jonas, fiercely. "I'm as good as your father at any rate, and a great deal better born and bred; and, if you can put up with him, you certainly can with me, who would do a vast deal more to please you than ever he would, and understand better what you want."

"No, no, no!" she gasped, desperately. "It is all so different. It is my duty to be with my father, and I can bear all for it; but for anything else—no, I would rather die."

"Bah, bah!" he said, scornfully; "that's stuff and nonsense. It is just what girls always say in such matters, whether for or against, and they get over it as comfortably as possible. Either they will die because they can't have a husband or because they are ordered to take one—any way it never happens; and you are too sensible for such nonsense. So just make up your mind without any more ado, and you shan't repent it."

"I have made up my mind, and I shall not repent it," was the firm, calm reply. "It is as impossible as if I were already in the grave, Mr. Dawes. Nothing could make me change my resolution. Please do not distress me by urging it, I have had so much to bear lately."

The bright tears sprang into the beautiful eyes that looked like the very mirrors of truth and purity.

"It's a great pity," replied Jonas, half sullenly; "because you see it's unpleasant for both of us, Miss Lovett. I had much rather you would have taken me at my word than have driven me to go into particulars; but, in plain English, there is no choice for you. You must marry me, for your father's safety, liberty—life, perhaps—depends on my will; and, if I speak the word, he will be at once branded as a criminal. That's the state of things, Miss Pauline, and it depends on you whether I shall say that word or not."

The girl's pale cheeks had grown whiter and whiter as he spoke, and she gazed at him with earnest, straining eyes, that seemed as if they could not take in the dreadful truth.

"It cannot be," she said. "Such cruel treachery surely does not exist in human being. You are but torturing me."

"As I hope for winning you, fair Pauline, I am speaking Heaven's truth," he replied, coolly. "I knew you would come round when you saw how things were, though I would not have told you if you had not forced it. But you needn't look so pale-struck, it will all be right; and I am as true as steel, unless I'm driven out of all patience and reason. You've only got to say yes, and we'll be married in a twinkling, and I'll burn every proof I've got of your father's guilt, and never cast it in your face nor his more. Listen, Pauline—I've not always been what I seem now. I was brought up to very different habits and ideas; and, if you will be my wife, you shall lead me back to better ways, and be an angel to me, as you are—a sweet, pure, beautiful angel."

Pauline had sunk on her chair, and covered her face with her clasped hands.

This new misery was well nigh past endurance. Her father, to whom she owed her being and duty and affection, not only a harsh, repulsive, coarse plebeian, but a criminal, in danger of liberty and life, and at the mercy of that smoother but perhaps more deeply dyed villain.

His fate depended on her wretchedness and on the intolerable alternative proposed to her.

But her sole thought was but the overpowering one that she could not perjure herself by false vows, that she dared not do evil that good might come.

"I cannot—I cannot; give me time!" she gasped, at length. "It is so dreadful. I cannot even think. Leave me, I entreat—I insist!" she added, with a wild despair in her eyes that really alarmed even the hardened and desperate man she addressed.

"I will—I will," he said, more soothingly. "But, Pauline, just listen to me for a moment. I do love you—yes, as strongly if more fiercely than one of the smooth-spoken puppies who used to say sweet things to you. Unless you drive me to it, I'll never hurt a hair of the old fellow's head or make you unhappy. You've a different nature I know to us, but still you mayb won't find me quite so bad as you think when once I've got you all to myself. There, there, don't look like that—I'm off; and if you're wise you'll say nothing to your father till we've had another talk on the subject—you'll get small comfort from him, I expect."

With a lingering look, that had the fierceness if not tenderness of love in its passionate gaze, he left the room.

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

PRESSURE UNDER WATER.—The pressure of 100 ft. of water may be reckoned three atmospheres, or 44 lb. per square inch. Hence at one mile deep it will be about 2,320 lb.; at two miles, 4,640 lb.; and at three miles, 6,960 lb. per square inch.

THE THIRTY-FIVE TON GUN.—The whole of the 35-ton guns yet completed (which, including the "Woolwich Infant," are ten in number) have now passed through the proof-test, and, excepting the infant (which is disabled), have only to be sighted and fitted with the usual adjusting scales to be ready for service.

MORTAR VESSELS.—Two more of the squadron of mortar vessels built for operations during the Russian War, and since laid up at Chatham Dockyard, have been launched, Admiralty orders directing that fourteen of the vessels are to be floated off, for use for harbour service. Launching ways have been laid down, and some of the mortar vessels are launched almost daily.

FISH TORPEDOES.—A number of workmen in Woolwich Laboratory, it is whispered, are specially employed in the manufacture of "fish torpedoes," machines of iron, in shape somewhat like a fish, about 5 ft. long and 1 ft. in thickness, each containing a little engine worked by compressed air, capable of propelling the torpedo a considerable distance under water with wonderful accuracy. When it strikes the hull of a hostile ship it explodes with fearful force.

A FLOATING BARRACK.—The old wooden man-of-war selected to be used as a floating barrack for the 4th or Torpedo Company of Royal Engineers—the "Hood," 30, 3308 tons, 600-horse power, now lying at Sheerness—will be removed to Chatham Dockyard to have the necessary alterations made to fit her for her new use. She will be placed in one of the new docks at the Dockyard Extension for the execution of the work. When the ship is ready for their reception the Torpedo Company will be quartered in her, she being moored in the Medway near Upnor.

THE WATER OF THE METROPOLIS.—Dr. Frankland, F.R.S., in his monthly report upon the quality of water supplied to the metropolis, states that during March the condition of the Thames and Lea showed considerable improvement, although the proportions of dissolved organic impurities contained in their waters were still in excess of those present previously to the recent floods. The waters supplied were perfectly clear and transparent, except those sent out by the Southwark and Vauxhall and Lambeth Companies; the waters of each of these two companies were slightly turbid, and that of the latter contained "moving organisms."

A NEW TURRET SHIP.—The engines of the "Monitor" frigate "Devastation" were tried at Portsmouth recently, and were found to work satisfactorily. They are much the largest of their special type, as independently working and driving twin-screw, that have yet been manufactured for any ship belonging to Her Majesty's navy. At the same time the first of the armour plates delivered for the ship's turrets was undergoing its trial in Porchester Creek. The plate was from the Cyclops Works, Sheffield, and was sent out from the works 23 feet in length, 8 feet in width, and 8 inches in thickness, and weighing 33 tons. Nine shots were fired at the plate from the usual test distance of 25 feet, and the results established the quality of the plate both as regards material and manufacture.

ITALIAN ARTILLERY.—*L'Italia Militaire* states on good authority that the Minister of War intends to begin the manufacture of 100 batteries (800 guns) of a new description of field piece, which are to be ready in two years from the date of the vote of the necessary funds. This new field gun, which may be considered as adopted, is to be of bronze, with a calibre of 75 millimetres, on Krupp's wedge breech-loading principle. The whole weight, including a gun-carriage of wrought-iron and a limber loaded with forty-eight rounds, is to be 1,180 kilogrammes, and the ammunition wagon, with 123 rounds, nearly 1,200 kilogrammes. It is intended to entrust the manufacture of this artillery to the Government workshops, but if it should appear that the resources of the military factories are likely to prove unequal to the task of finishing this large order in so short a time it is expected that the Minister of War will appeal to the industry of private contractors.

COPPER GAS PIPES.—*The Journal de l'Eclairage* notices an accident which once more proves the danger of using copper gas pipes. On the 21st of April last a workman having, with a triangular file, cut almost through half the diameter of a gas-pipe of red copper of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. interior diameter, which supplied the Liège station, was removing the tool

when an explosion similar to the report of a rifle ensued, and the workman was much burnt. A similar incident happened the other day, with less intensity, however; and the workman, who was not injured, did not report the circumstance. Some gas-pipes having been taken down, they were found covered with a blackish coating, and they showed evident signs of corrosion from ammoniacal condensation. The black matter was analyzed, and was found to consist of an acetate of copper, which exploded between 203 and 248 degrees—producing water, copper, carbon, carbonic acid, and traces of carbonic oxide.

WAR VESSELS AND LIFE-BOATS.—Mr. Goschen's promise a few nights since for a thorough investigation into the accident on board the "Ariadne" was more satisfactory than his explanations of the reason why the ship was not furnished with life-boats. It is quite clear that, whatever may have been the decision of the Admiralty in 1863, it ought not to be left to the discretion of any captain of a ship whether she shall carry life-boats or not. No vessel shall be sent out without a life-boat; and in all cases the very best possible method of lowering the boats should be uniformly adopted. The clumsy methods of lowering boats are still discreditable to mechanical science; and, though it is unfortunate that improvements are not made till some melancholy disaster calls attention to the need for them, if the "Ariadne" accident should cause the universal adoption of a better method of lowering boats the poor fellows will not have suffered in vain.

A WAVE OF COLD.—The meteorological observations now made and telegraphed daily in America disclosed, in February, the path of a great atmospheric wave of cold across that continent. The *Chicago Tribune* states that on the night of the 11th the telegram to that city announced that at Fort Benton the thermometer had suddenly fallen to 15 deg. below zero, but none of the other signal stations exhibited any marked change of temperature. On the 12th the thermometer fell 35 deg. at Omaha. At Chicago it stood at about 43 deg. until midnight, with a very light movement of the atmosphere; the icy wind then arrived, and the mercury dropped 33 deg. in ten hours, and fell still lower in the evening, the wave passing on towards the south-east. It traversed the distance from Fort Benton to Chicago at the rate of 25 to 30 miles per hour, and it is stated extended at least 100 miles north of the line from Fort Benton to Omaha, but not so far to the south. The barometer rose as rapidly as the thermometer fell.

ENGLISH RAILWAYS IN CASE OF INVASION.—The Marquis of Ripon, when Secretary of State for War, created the Engineer and Railway Volunteer Staff Corps, through whose agency we believe we should, if occasion required, obtain all the benefits of which our railway system admits in the movement of troops. This useful corps, composed of the leading civil engineers and railway authorities, has, we believe, very fully considered the question of the concentration of an army for the defence of England; and we understand that it has been calculated that an army of about 320,000 men (if such a force existed in this country), nearly 40,000 horses, and between 300 and 400 guns, and 2,000 waggons and carriages, could be concentrated at a given point on the coast in eighty hours from the time of the order being given, without any previous notice; and that of these about 45,000 men and 7,000 horses could be brought up in twelve hours, and about half the whole force in thirty-six hours. Moreover, that if, from such a concentrated force, it were required to move 230,000 men, and all the horses, guns, and carriages, to another given point on the coast at a distance of from 150 to 200 miles, a period of forty-eight hours would be required to complete the operation; but, of course, the larger portion would be on the selected ground long before that time. These are the calculations of practical men, accustomed to move daily large trains of goods and passengers; and we may feel confidence in the soundness of their conclusions.

SCHOOLS V. ARMIES.—"There is at least one State in Europe," says a Dutch educational weekly, "where there is more money spent on education than on the army. In Switzerland the educational budget amounts to over ten millions of francs, whereas the military expenses remain below that sum; yet in time of need the happy Republic can raise an army of 200,000 men."

INSPECTION OF SHIPS IN THE ROYAL NAVY.—With a view to prevent the recurrence of disasters from a similar cause to that which proved fatal to the *Megara*, the Admiralty have issued an order that, in all ships in which it is impossible to examine the hull internally without raising the boilers to inspect beneath them, the boilers are to be raised once in three years, to permit of such examination being made. The time during which the vessels are not afloat, as when hauled up on the slip, is not to be reckoned in the three years.



ADA ARGYLE.

CHAPTER XII.

To be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering.

Milton.

It was near sunset when the little company of half-famished men, after long and anxious waiting, saw the welcome procession approaching, and their joy and relief were so great that they no longer either thought of the necessity of any precaution or doubted the pacific disposition of the red-men who had sent them so bounteous a supply of food.

This conviction was confirmed when Congo came and returned the money to its owners and briefly told the story, but it was not fully shared by the negro himself.

"They may be all right," he said, "but they think you've got rifles and cannons, and that makes a difference. These boys are using their eyes, you see, and will report to them what a falsehood I told about all the guns. So I think we'd better be off."

Captain Chrome considered this to be prudential counsel on the whole, and although disposed to judge the Indians leniently he advised an immediate return to the boats, which were in full view, and the three red-men seemed to be eyeing them very narrowly.

They expressed no surprise, however, at the absence of the "thunder guns," nor at the unarmed condition of the white men, which could not have escaped their observation, and, having accepted some presents of pocket knives and jewellery—Mr. Argyle gave one of them a large seal ring—they departed, and the white men started for their boats.

They were much enfeebled, however, by fasting and toil; the way was rough and stormy, and they had the venison to carry, so they made but slow progress, and some alarm was excited by seeing that the Indian messengers, who had started moderately enough, were all soon on a rapid run.

It does not take an Indian long to run a mile, but there was plenty of time to embark and obtain a safe offing, unless they were to be followed by the red-men in boats, and if such a pursuit should be made with hostile intent flight or resistance would be equally vain.

Thus Argyle argued, and keeping very calm himself advised the others to do so too.

"I believe they are all right," he said; "pray let's have a little faith in human nature, my friends, and not believe men to be fiends when they have shown us nothing but kindness."

"But they tried pretty hard to cut me to pieces at first," said Congo.

[RETREAT CUT OFF.]

"Because they thought you were an enemy, and had come to harm them. That's all, Joe."

"Yes—the squaws were at the bottom of it. They first got frightened for nothing, then told awful falsehoods about me, and set the men on."

"Don't reflect on the gentle sex, Joe," said the captain, laughing.

"Gentle! I wish you could have seen one that tried to get at me with a club. I should like to cure her of the fever ague. The corkscrew shouldn't come out of the same ear it went in at. Not at all, sir—it should go clear through."

"Yet probably she was a good wife and mother, and thought she was defending her children from a robber and murderer. Probably she had a woman's nature, and under other circumstances she would have fed and protected you."

"Oh—would she though? You're a good man, Mr. Argyle; you think well of everybody—even of the grizzly bears and the sharks, I suppose."

"Yes, they are what Heaven made them. They eat men, indeed, as we eat mutton, not out of malice, but because they are hungry and like that kind of food."

"Wouldn't you kill them?"

"Yes, if they came in my way and endangered my life, or that of others—not otherwise."

While they talked they reached the boats and embarked safely without farther sight of the red-men, and they began to anticipate with delight the substantial supper which they should make an hour or so later in some secure spot on the coast.

"It was a great mistake on our part in not making some inquiry of the Indians about the country, and whether we are near any white settlement," said Captain Chrome. "They might have saved us several days' journey by heading us the right way."

"Yes—that was a mistake," replied Argyle; "but I think we are going to have an opportunity of correcting it. Look at the canoes coming around yonder point."

True enough. The red-men were coming. There was no escaping that conclusion, or escaping them, if they had any evil design.

"Here they are!" exclaimed Mr. Hare, in great alarm, for he had from the first refused to believe anything good of the Indians.

According to his views they were all treacherous, crafty, cruel, and, in short, utterly depraved, his opinions being founded on the writings of certain extremists in border romance.

"We are all lost, I say, unless we can frighten them off, but I suppose Mr. Argyle would like to try a little 'moral suasion' upon them."

The village which Congo had visited was north of the spot where the white party had landed, but not

very near the coast, having been built in the shelter of a piece of woodland which did not extend to the shore.

In resuming their voyage northward—for in this direction they were almost certain they should find their friends—they were compelled to pass the Indian settlement, but they had designed to do so out of gun-shot of the shore, and were making their way outward for this purpose when the pursuit was discovered.

Four long canoes, containing seven or eight men apiece, were coming around a little jutting cape, about due east of the wigwams; and as they were headed directly towards a point at which they must intercept the two boats, no doubt could be entertained that a meeting, either hostile or friendly, was intended.

"We are in their power, and they know it," replied Argyle as the canoes swiftly advanced, going at twice the utmost speed which could have been made by the heavier boats of the whites. "There is not much credit in pacific measures on our part now. We have no other resource."

"Haven't we?" replied Hare, who unfortunately was the owner of the one revolver in the party, and he was wild with excitement and alarm. "I tell you when they have seen this thing discharged four or five times without reloading they'll think it will go a hundred times, and they'll retreat faster than they came."

"Put it up!" shouted Argyle.

"Put it up!" repeated Captain Chrome, "or at least do nothing more than show it, or you'll draw down death upon all of us."

"Death is coming fast enough, in my opinion," replied Hare. "I have a right to defend myself, and shall, and perhaps save all the rest of you."

There was great danger that the imprudent man would precipitate fatal results, and the captain and Argyle, who were not in the same boat with him, made signs to some of those who were to disarm him, but, in the confusion, these gestures were misunderstood or disregarded.

The canoes were already close at hand, and as the foremost drew near to the boat in which Mr. Hare sat, although the red-men were bowing and smiling and talking unintelligibly, the frantic young man presented his revolver, shouting "Keep off! Keep off! or I'll fire!"

The Indians could not have instantly stopped the headway of their canoe if they had wished; it still darted forward, and, amidst cries of "Don't, Hare! Don't! For Heaven's sake, stop him!" two quick reports were heard, and one of the red-men fell backward, oar in hand, and lay stretched upon the bottom of the boat.

It was a terrible moment. A dozen guns came into sight, and half of them were already presented and the click of the locks was heard on every side, when the still-outstretched revolver was knocked from Hare's hand into the lake by one of his companions, and the loud voice of Dertejap arrested the leaden storm which in another instant would have dealt destruction upon the dismayed white men.

But although the guns were lowered at the chief's command they were not put down, and for some minutes there was a jargon of loud and angry words among the Indians, with fierce gestures and scowls, and it was evidently all that their leader could do to restrain them from taking instant vengeance for the outrage which had been inflicted upon them.

Some raised and succoured the man who had been shot, but his wound was evidently mortal, and as they tried to staunch the blood which flowed profusely from his breast their wrath and grief broke out afresh and threatened to set the authority of their leader at defiance.

Dertejap, in fact, did not look much less indignant than his comrades, when, their clamour having abated, he turned towards Congo, and asked, in a mournful voice:

"Why have my brothers done this?" Captain Chrome was about to reply, when Argyle laid his hand upon his arm and said:

"Wait! Let Joe be our spokesman since he has already done so well. Tell him the truth, Joe, and see that the whole blame falls where it belongs."

The chief repeated his question, and Joe, getting as near to him as he could, replied, rubbing his eyes:

"I tell you what, captain, it's all a mistake."

"No unstan?"

"You see this man?" continued Joe, pointing to Captain Chrome.

The Indian nodded.

"He is our chief. He good man; we all good men except him," pointing to Hare.

"What do you mean, you rascal?" said the expected man.

"Keep still, Mr. Hare," replied Argyle, authoritatively, "or you'll be compelled to. This matter has to be explained. You would not take our advice, and you must now bear the blame of your own actions."

"I did what I thought was right."

"Very well; now we shall do what we think is right. You just keep still, that's all you've got to do."

"He bad man," continued Congo. "He shooty-shooty. We try to stop him very much. We all very sorry, Captain Dirtychap, very," and again the negro knuckled his eyes and almost brought tears.

All this had to be repeated several times before it was understood, and when the chief had explained it to his people their concentrated gaze of hatred fell upon the rash offender, who evidently quailed before it.

"We came in peace," said Dertejap. "We brought presents to our white brothers. See!"

He pointed as he spoke to a very large salmon trout and a string of bass which lay in one of the boats, together with a bundle of dried corn and a gourd full of wild strawberries, red and luscious.

The offerings left no doubt of the pacific, nay friendly nature of the visit, and the blush of shame succeeded the ashen hue of fear on the cheek of the guilty man as he gazed upon them.

Captain Chrome now addressed the chief, expressing the deepest sorrow for what had happened, and begging that they might be forgiven and be permitted to proceed on their voyage, as they were a party of shipwrecked men in great distress, being separated from their friends, and some of them from their wives and children who were somewhere on the coast.

Having seemingly made himself understood by words and signs, he next collected and offered to the chief all the silver coin in the possession of the company, and Hare, taking the hint from these proceedings, hastily drew out his watch and handed it to the captain to be added to the presents.

But Dertejap turned scornfully away from these gifts, and refused to receive or to look at them.

"We must not sell our brother's blood," he said, and, turning to his men, he conferred with them for a few minutes, then announced as the general voice of his party that the white men were all at liberty to proceed on their voyage, except the offender, who must be given up to them to be dealt with after their customs.

Mr. Hare turned pale and trembled very much when this decision was announced, but no argument or entreaties of his own or of his friends could produce any change or sign of wavering in the minds of the red-men.

They listened attentively to all that was said, but still Dertejap replied to it all in the same words, and almost in the same tone. Life for life was their law. He was very sorry for the young man, he said, but he could not protect him if he would from those who

had a right to demand his blood—the relations of the slain man.

"Pray don't give me up, gentlemen," exclaimed Hare. "They will burn me at the stake. They will torture me for a whole day."

"We can't possibly save you, Hare," replied the captain. "We have no weapons excepting three small pistols, and here are twenty-six armed men."

"Don't—don't give me up!"

"We certainly shall not give you up," said Mr. Argyle; "but we can't prevent their taking you. I advise you to meet your fate like a man, and as to their torturing you I do not believe they will do it. I will speak to them about it, or rather, if our friends agree, we will all return with you to the shore, and see if anything farther can be done for you."

"Yes—yes, thank you—thank you a thousand times, Mr. Argyle. I have been rude to you, but you are a good man. Yes, stay with me to the last. It will be something to have my friends near me, and not to be left quite alone with these demons. Oh, my father! My poor father! He might better have been lost than to hear of this!"

Several of the white party protested earnestly against returning with the Indians, saying that they had been too long absent from their friends, and that every hour's delay diminished the chances of finding them.

Besides, they added, it was running into unnecessary danger, for there was no telling what might happen when the Indians were incited to wrath by their women and by their orators, who would harangue them over the very body of the murdered man, and demand a fourfold retribution.

The pilot was among these objectors, and, as the three men who (besides Hare) were in his boat concurred with him and absolutely insisted on availing themselves of their right to go on, no one claimed the power to gainsay them.

Mr. Hare could be transferred into the captain's boat, they said, but when this was attempted Dertejap directed that he should be put at once into one of the canoes, which movement better suited the Indians, who seemed anxious to get hold of their prisoner.

He was taken into the very boat which held his unfortunate victim, who was already quite dead, and was made to sit down in the bottom of the vessel alongside of the corpse.

The horror of his position was indescribable, and was fully expressed in his countenance, though he strove to maintain some degree of fortitude and manliness.

"Promise me that you will shoot me, Argyle, if it should come to the worst," he said, eagerly, "and not let me be tortured. Oh, promise me that."

"We will do all that we can for you," was the evasive reply; "but remember we are all in the power of these men, and that we have to be careful of giving them farther offence."

The unfortunate man sighed, and looked over into the blue waters, seeming tempted to precipitate himself into their calm depths and thus end his woes—but watchful eyes were upon him and active hands would have defeated any such attempt.

Dertejap made no objection to Captain Chrome and his companions returning with them to the village. He said indeed that they should be quite welcome, and should be at liberty to depart whenever they chose, but he warned them that they must not attempt to interfere in any way with the course of justice or he would not be answerable for the consequences.

Of course the chief did not use exactly this language, but he succeeded by words and signs in expressing such a meaning.

Mr. Argyle was in great anxiety about his daughter, but he had still felt it his duty to go with poor Hare and attempt at least to mitigate his fate.

Besides Captain Chrome, Mr. Argyle and Congo, there were three men in the boat which returned with the Indians and their prisoner, one of them, a Mr. Hutton, being a gruff backwoodsman, who went rather grumblingly and more out of bravado and fear of being considered cowardly than from motives of humanity.

The exciting events of the hour had engrossed all thoughts, but some one in the pilot's boat was considerate enough before parting with the Indians to inquire about their position, and how far and in what direction they were from Thunder Bay.

The red-men knew nothing of any locality by that name, and one of them asked with great simplicity if the white men wanted to go to the place where the thunder was made.

This question was put to Congo by one of the "privates," as he called Dertejap's followers, who spoke a little broken English, and Joe replied:

"No, not there exactly, but I believe it is a place where it comes down mighty strong."

Some valuable information was obtained. The land in view Dertejap said was an island, "much big," and there were no inhabitants on it except his tribe; in fact, he considered himself a sort of sove-

reign upon it, as Mr. Argyle afterwards learned from him. He had a foreboding that the time would come when the white race would take possession of it and drive his people away. This, however, he thought would not be in his day, and that was about equivalent, as far as he was concerned, to its never taking place.

The rest of his information was not very explicit. He directed the pilot to keep along the coast until he came to the north end of the island, which was about twenty somethings distant—he showed all his fingers twice to express the number, but whether he meant rods or miles or something else no one could make out.

Then they would see the "great shore," he said, very far off, with "much trees and big hill," and this description of the main land answered so nearly to that of the region where the wrecked boats had first landed that little doubt was entertained of its being the same place.

About a day's journey north of this place, Dertejap said, was a little village of the pale-faces, on the lake shore, where the big "fire canoes" sometimes stopped, but he thought only in storms when the Great Manitou shook up the lake very much.

The chief said he did not know much about this white settlement, and did not want to; but it afterwards became apparent he had a presentiment that they were part of the advance wave of that great tide of civilisation which was destined to sweep slowly over the western world and occupy at last all the ancient homes and haunts of the red-men.

Captain Chrome instructed the pilot, if he found their friends, to advise them not to wait for his party, but to set out immediately in their boats for the settlement which the Indians had described. He sent all the food which the red-men had given them, and to this the latter now added the fish in their canoes, and he urged the men to row all night, if necessary, and try to reach their comrades soon after the day-dawn, as they must, if still on the coast, be suffering greatly from hunger.

Then they parted, but not until Mr. Hare had bidden them severally good-bye, and shaken hands with them with much solemnity and with some tears on both sides.

"If you find our folks," he whispered, eagerly, to the pilot, "bring them here to rescue me! Row hard! Row all night! And start right back with them in the morning. They'll be in time—oh, they'll be in time if you hurry! Will you—will you, Mr. Case?"

"Why, Mr. Hare," replied the man, "don't you know they haven't a single gun or weapon of any kind among them except a few pistols?"

"No matter. These Indians are great cowards, and they'll run like sheep if they see so many men coming. Do try, Mr. Case!"

"It's of no use, Mr. Hare, to indulge any hope of this kind," replied the pilot, who was a blunt man, "nor for me to promise what we cannot do, and shall not attempt. Try to meet your fate like a man. You seem to think nothing of the poor fellow whom you have sent so suddenly out of the world, and whose life was probably as dear to him as yours is to you."

"Oh, yes—yes, I do; I am really very sorry for him—but you know they won't let me off for that."

"I know they won't. You must expect to die now; and since it is so certain bear it bravely. Death comes but once, and once it is sure to come to all. What matters a few years?"

"Oh, I am so young; and I have a wife and two sweet children. Oh, good heavens—it cannot be! You must save me. Somebody—something must save me from these fiends."

The pilot turned away, not without tears, and, giving a sign to the men at the oars, they started the ready boat, while the miserable man still stood with imploring hands outstretched towards them.

Dertejap, who had waited with perfect patience and composure all this time, now gave the signal for starting to his own men, and the little fleet of canoes began to glide swiftly shoreward, followed more leisurely by the heavier boat of the white party, which was soon left far behind, and to which the prisoner continued to look eagerly back, seeming to fear that his friends, finding themselves so entirely at liberty, might change their minds and desert him after all.

Mr. Hutton, indeed, tried to induce them to do so, but his comrades would not listen to him, and Argyle silenced him by reminding him that they had given their promise to Mr. Hare in this matter, and could not now, in honour, recede from it.

CHAPTER XIII.

I will despair, and be at enmity with all men, and wish every body's life; he is a sinner. Shakespeare.

It was after sunset when the white party reached the Indian village, where the red-men had preceded them with their prisoner, and the former had not the opportunity of witnessing the first reception of

the mournful news by the women and children of the tribe.

But the commotion was very great when they arrived; the squaws were screaming and chattering, and one, the widow of the deceased warrior, was sitting beside his corpse on the grass, her head entirely enveloped in her blanket, rocking herself to and fro, and now and then emitting a wail of grief which seemed quite as genuine and intense as those which bereavement everywhere elicits in the world of civilization.

There was a lad apparently of eighteen or nineteen years, and two olive girls of about twelve and fourteen, children of the slain man, who hovered about their mother, and although they gave way now and then to passionate cries of grief, seemed chiefly intent on comforting her.

The son, indeed, mingled his words of consolation to his remaining parent with the promise that on the morrow she should herself see her husband's murderer immolated beneath the clubs of their people, or burnt at the glowing pile; but in this he was doubtless influenced more by his education than by the promptings of his nature, for he was mild and placid in demeanour, and as yet no baleful look of hatred or revenge gleamed in his dark eyes.

These passions might be awakened as Marc Antony, beside the corpse of the murdered Cæsar, aroused them in the hearts of a more enlightened people, but as yet there was but little evidence of their existence.

Mr. Argyle and Captain Chrome gathered some encouragement from those appearances, but they soon learned from Dertejap that there was no ground for hope.

Even if the wife and children of the slain man should prove lenient, he had a brother and father who would both be implacable, and indeed most of the small tribe could claim some affinity to the deceased, and had a right to insist on their revenge.

The council sat in the evening. It was short, and its decision was unanimous, not even Dertejap raising his voice in behalf of the man who had so grossly wronged his people.

Mr. Hare was condemned to death, with the privilege of running the gauntlet if he chose, and taking the slight chance of escape which it offered him.

In other words, he was to be burnt at the stake in the first place, or he was to run for his life between two files of men and women—comprising all the tribe—armed with clubs, who were to stand facing each other, and were to strike at him as he went past.

No fire-arms or knives were to be used upon him, and if he passed unharmed through the files he was to have his liberty; but if he were knocked down or disabled he was to be taken at once to the stake and burnt.

"How much chance of escape did this process offer?" Argyle inquired of the chief.

When made to comprehend the question Dertejap replied in substance that a strong, active warrior, who was accustomed to ruses and feints, who could dodge, and dive, and leap like a fox, and could stand up under a heavy blow, might possibly get through safely. There would be one chance in ten for one like him.

"But how would it be with the present prisoner?" Argyle asked. "What was his chance?"

"Much little," replied the chief, smiling faintly; "but half of nothing at all. He no git past six squaws. He too much scare."

Poor Hare had been tightly bound with bear-skin thongs, and thrown down at the foot of a tree, where a single guard kept watch over him, but he had been provided with food, and his friends were permitted to communicate freely with him, and from them he received the tidings of his doom.

He listened at first with some gleam of hope, but this soon vanished when he learned the full programme of the scene to be enacted.

The women and large boys were to be placed first in the line—the oldest and least skilful of the men next, while the far end of this ally of death was to be composed of the best braves of the tribe, to whom it would be a lasting disgrace to allow the panting fugitive to get past them.

"I've a mind to refuse it," said Hare, with a groan. "It's only for their sport as a cat plays with a mouse, which she is sure to destroy at last. But they may kill me with a blow, and that will be better than burning. No, I'll run. At what time is to be?"

"Soon after breakfast, and we are to have breakfast at sunrise," Argyle told him. "Try to get a good night's sleep, and that will strengthen you for the task."

"Yes, I shall probably sleep well and have pleasant dreams," replied the prisoner, bitterly.

"You may. Such things have been." Then in the morning I will see that you have a good breakfast, and, if you wish, some brandy to give you courage, for I have some still left in my flask. Come, cheer up, and make an effort for your life."

"Thank you, Argyle. You would make a man hope under the descending blade of the guillotine, I believe. Well, I will try. But I cannot sleep yet. I want to write to my poor wife and father first. I have a pencil and some old letters which I can cross, and you, perhaps, can obtain for me the freedom of my right hand for an hour. At least, I know you will try."

Argyle obtained this favour and others for the prisoner. His hands were so far loosed that they might not give him pain, and he was removed into one of the huts for the night and was furnished with a bed of boughs.

Still he was watched all night long, closely and ceaselessly, not by one man now, but by two, who stood motionless at the two ends of his couch.

His eyes closed upon them, when, after long waiting, he sank into a troubled sleep, but he still saw them in dreams, and he woke many times ere morning to behold them still and statue-like, but always facing each other, and always facing him.

But he could have done nothing towards escape if they had been less vigilant, for his ankles were bound together and his arms were pinioned to his side.

Mr. Argyle's sympathy for the young man was extreme. He could not bear to give him up, and he spent a considerable portion of the night talking with the patient chief, and trying to induce a change of action; but as Dertejap was evidently acting on principle, and not from passion, the chance of winning him over to the side of mercy was very slight.

Nor would it do any good, he said, for him to urge the prisoner's release, while by such a course he would only render himself unpopular and aid the pretensions of a rival claimant to his station without effecting the end in view.

He had no right to command them in anything contrary to their well-established customs, which would seem to be equivalent to the "common law" of civilized lands.

But would he allow Mr. Argyle to talk to them collectively in the morning and himself not as interpreter for both sides?

Yes—Dertejap would do that in as far as he could, but it was very hard for him to understand his white friend or to make himself understood by him. It was "slow talk," he said, and "much fog."

"Let me tell you then now part of what I wish said to them."

The chief nodded.

"A man has a right to kill his enemy in order to save his own life."

With some difficulty Dertejap was made to comprehend this proposition, then he heartily assented to it.

"Mr. Hare thought you had come to kill us."

"Uhl! No! No! No business tink dat."

"No matter. He did think it. He was foolish—I admit—"

"Much foolish."

"Yes—but not much bad. He's a good man at heart. He's very sorry. It was a mistake. You will tell them this?"

"Yes—me, tell um. But no good. The 'Strong Arm' is dead. See!" pointing to the corpse which still lay unsheltered and watched by the faithful widow.

"Was that his name?"

"Yes. No strong now. A-a-a-h!"

Something like a wail escaped the chieftain's lips, and he shook his head angrily.

"But you will tell them?"

"Yes."

"Tell them that Mr. Hare thought he was defending his life."

"Yes—him foolish."

"You need not say that. You speak for me. You use my tongue. Eh?"

"Yes—my brother is right."

"Tell them the white man's Maker is the same as the Indian's Great Spirit. That He is up there looking down on all of us now."

Dertejap looked up and then bowed reverently.

"Yes. The Manitou is there. I have heard Him thunder. I have seen His fire many times. I know He is there! But I not think He is white man's Maker."

"There is but one Maker," replied Argyle. "He has made of one blood all nations of men." This is certain."

"It may be so."

"Will you tell them this for me?"

"Yes."

"Tell them also that many thousands of moons ago He sent His Son down out of the sky to teach all people His will. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

Dertejap had heard the story before. Many years ago he had visited his friends, the Ottawas, near Detroit, and there, a white "medicine man" had told them. He did not know whether it was true or not, but his red brethren there believed it.

"It is certainly true," replied Argyle. "We white men know it. He healed the sick. He brought

the dead to life. He walked on the great lake. He stilled the tempest, and made the winds and waves obey Him. Our fathers saw it, and they have told us."

"Good! He was a good man!"

"He was the son of the Great Spirit."

Dertejap bowed.

"He told us His will, and what we must do to be happy hereafter. He said we must forgive our enemies, and do good to them, and His Father, the Great Spirit, would forgive us and make us happy for ever. Do you understand this?"

Dertejap seemed greatly interested, though a look of indignation and scorn crossed his features when his companion spoke of forgiving his enemies. But it passed away, and to the last question he replied, quickly:

"Unstan' little. Not too much. My white brother may spoke un again."

Argyle did. He explained and expounded his epitome of the Gospel at some length, declaring how the Son of the Great Spirit had died for us—how He had forgiven His murderers and expected His followers to imitate His example out of love to Him. If they did so—if they believed in Him, and obeyed His commands, they need never fear death—as they would have another life hereafter, which would be all happiness, and would never end.

Dertejap listened very attentively, and promised to report this strange story faithfully to his people in the morning.

"Are you sure, my brother," he asked, "that He walked on the top of the water?"

"Yes," replied Argyle, earnestly.

"And made the wind go back, and the waves fall down flat?"

"Yes."

"And made dead men live again?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"I will tell my people. Let my brother sleep now, for it is late."

The prisoner was awake early, and was permitted to have the gages at once removed from his arms and ankles, in order that those parts might recover their natural vigour before the hour for the dreadful ordeal appointed for him.

His friends found him utterly despondent, and Argyle, who was first at his side, said nothing of his last interview with Dertejap, nor of the promised conference of the morning, because he did not wish to awaken hopes which were so likely to be disappointed.

"I know it will be useless for me to run," the captive said, "and I am resolved not to attempt it, excepting on one condition."

"What is that?"

"The captain has a pistol. If he will give it to me loaded, so that I can use it on myself in case of failure in the lines, and thus escape the stake, I will try it. Otherwise they may as well burn me first as last."

The unfortunate man had begged repeatedly for this weapon before, and it had been refused him, but as he seemed very resolute in his present determination Captain Chrome consented to give it to him on his pledge of honour that he would not make use of it except in the last extremity—not till the faggots around him were fired, or some equivalent torture was begun.

He exhorted him, however, to do his best in running the gauntlet, reminding him that there was a possibility of escape if he were vigilant and active.

"Well, captain, I have promised to try, and I will do my best, if I have this pistol as a last resort. How am I to get it?"

"It is in my pocket; and I will find an opportunity in a few minutes to lay it down beside you wrapped in my handkerchief, when these men are not looking. Then you can take it up and secrete it about you, for as you have already been searched they will probably not do it again."

Mr. Hare was supplied with an early breakfast, a repast which he could have enjoyed very fully but for the doom which awaited him, now so close at hand.

As it was he ate pretty heartily, and while doing so the captain succeeded in giving him his pistol unobserved.

The rest of the white men and Congo breakfasted, as they had supped, with the chief.

Breakfast was over in the chief's cabin about sunrise, and still earlier in the other huts, so that when Dertejap and his guests went forth the bustle of preparation for the great event of the day was everywhere seen.

The women were running in and out of each other's cabins, clamorous and merry; the children were playing on the green, with whoop and halloo, and here and there a brave, with his war paint on, might be seen hurrying across the square with all the consequential airs of a militia officer on "a field day."

Outside of this little village, on the edge of the forest, two rows of larger boys and girls were playing a mimic game of running the gauntlet, which they rehearsed with great accuracy, excepting that they were very careful not to hit the seemingly frightened fugitive at whom their blows were aimed with apparent fury; and had not a loud laugh now and then rung throughout the belligerent ranks, and been echoed by the dodging runner himself, the whole scene might have seemed as real as that more solemn one which was shortly to be enacted.

Dortejap did not require to be reminded of his promise to Argyle; he called a hasty and informal council of his warriors in front of his own tent, to which they came rather wonderingly, and some of them surlily enough, for they did not wish their sport deferred by "long talks."

He told them his white brethren had something to say to them, but he was interrupted by derisive cries, and by inquiries whether the pale-faces could not talk to them as well in the afternoon when the business of the day was over.

"Do they wish to pay for the blood of Strong Arm? How much, now? The great fire-cane could not carry silver enough to pay for this great crime. The great lake could not wash out his blood from our hands, if we should accept money for it, and let the murderer go free. Tell them that. What do we want of shining silver? We cannot use it. Besides, we are already rich. The forests and the lake are ours, and we draw from them all that we want and more, for we have abundance to give to the starving pale-faces who come begging among us, then repay our kindness by killing our bravest warrior. They ought all to die, and if Kamsell had his way they should, for the ghost of Strong Arm is unappeased, and his widow and children weep over his body and call for revenge. They look reproachfully upon us. They ask, why carries the avenger, and why are the brethren and friends of the murderer protected—may, feasted in our midst? It is not the part of a good chief, who is the father of his people, to do this. Kamsell has spoken."

This impromptu harangue was spoken in his own language by the orator of the tribe, who was a near relative of the chief, and aspired to be his successor in office, which he might become even in the lifetime of Dortejap, as the latter had superseded the centenarian.

It was applauded by many of the warriors, and by nearly all the women; and the chief, who looked much disturbed, translated it as nearly as he could into English.

Mr. Argyle, who had been warned against making any offer of money to redeem Hare's life, now smiled, and, coming a little forward, addressed the excited red-men for a few minutes in mild, persuasive tones, and with many expressive gestures.

He repeated in substance what he had said to Dortejap on the evening before, and the latter interpreted the remarks sentence by sentence with tolerable correctness.

A long consultation ensued between the Indians, ten or twelve of them speaking in turn, slowly and seemingly without passion.

Dortejap remained some minutes silent, waiting perhaps for the effect of the orator's words to abate, then he arose with much dignity, and spoke for about five minutes in a slow but earnest way, with not a little emphasis, and with many gestures.

Some nods of approval responded to his remarks, but no other manifestations of applause were made, and when he had concluded he turned towards Mr. Argyle, and told him that the signs were unfavourable, but that the counting of voices would be made in a few minutes, then he would tell him the result.

(To be continued.)

IMPORTANCE OF PROPER FOOD FOR FOWLS.—If treated rightly the domestic fowl is the most profitable of all live stock; but that it seldom is treated rightly we are more and more convinced by the experience and correspondence of every year. Thus it happens that any work on poultry, to be of real use, must always of necessity be dogmatic. Unless many persons are told that they must treat their poultry in a certain way they will not do it; and hence it is necessary to be definite and imperative. Again and again have editors of poultry organs to give the same answers to the questions; again and again have they had the trouble of reading and answering letters complaining of want of success, addressed to them on account of their previous writings, only to find, on inquiry, that their very simplest and plainest directions had been utterly disregarded. People seem to think that if they only read sound directions their fowls must thrive; and the amount of ignorance regarding poultry and their proper treatment is amazing. Three-fourths of any town population even yet believe that if a citizen be so insane as to keep his own fowls every egg he obtains will cost him 6d.; whereas 4d. per dozen,

under proper management, would be nearer the mark. But, always supposing a proper house for the number of fowls, and fowls properly chosen year by year, such a result will altogether depend upon judicious feeding.

MYSTERY OF THE HAUNTED GRANGE.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LORD MONTALIEN, looking keenly into the face of Sir Vane Charteris, answered his question by asking: "What will the world say when I discover Lady Charteris's hiding-place and give her the papers I hold? What will the world say when the conspiracy of the late Geoffrey Lyndith comes to light?"

"A conspiracy in which I had no part," put in the baronet.

Lord Montalien smiled grimly as he continued:

"Robert Lisle was in the church upon the day of your marriage, and you saw him face to face. Six o'clock."

He paused until the last chime vibrated, then arose.

"I will not detain you from your needful rest a moment longer, Sir Vane. You will think over this matter, and will do as I suggest I am sure. Bring all the influence you and your sister possess to bear upon this wilful girl—let fair means be tried until patience ceases to be a virtue. Then take her to 'The Firs,' I will go with you; night and day I will plead my suit until, as constant dropping wears away a stone, she will yield at length."

The baronet arose too. The daylight stealing through the curtains and struggling with the wax lights fell faintly on their pale faces.

"Lord Montalien, why do you wish so strongly to marry this girl?"

"Rather a delicate question. Because I love her of course. You don't believe that. Well, here's another reason for you—I want to marry her because I want to marry her. She hates me—she scorns me! Let her! I will tame that pride yet, bring her to her knees, humble her to the dust. I love her, I admire her, and I hate her. I am determined to marry her in spite of fate—in spite of herself! Sir Vane Charteris, I wish you good-morning!"

"Mrs. Galbraith, who is to take us to the concert to-night?"

Miss Lisle looked up from *Le Follet* to ask this question. It was the evening succeeding the ball. Dinner was over, and for a wonder, Lord Montalien had not dined at the East Cliff. The cosy Brighton drawing-room was a pretty picture, with its silk, ruby-hued hangings, its Axminster carpet, its proof engravings, its hot-house flowers, its glowing coal fire, and its softly abundant gas-lights. Outside the wintry stars shone frostily in the deep blue, and the wintry wind whistled shrilly up from the dark, wide sea.

The belle of Brighton, nestling in a cosy seat before the fire—for she loved warmth like a tropical bird—in the full glow of the leaping light, looked fresh as a rose and quite as lovely.

Mrs. Galbraith, shrouded in Chantilly lace, and reading also, laid down her novel, and Miss Maud Charteris, at the piano, ceased singing to hear the answer.

"Yesterday morning," pursued the heiress, "it was decided that we were to go with Sir Vane. Two hours ago Sir Vane left by the express for London. Now who is to take us to the concert?"

The concert of which the young lady spoke was one of more than usual interest for her. Her love for music amounted to a passion, and to-night Signor Carlo Friellson was to make his first appearance. Her heart had been set upon going, as the lady in Chantilly lace very well knew.

"Lord Montalien, of course," she said, in her smooth, even voice; "I expect him every moment; and really it is almost eight, and quite time to dress."

Miss Lisle's eyes fell once more upon the pages of *Le Follet*, and Miss Lisle's lips set themselves in that resolute line that Mrs. Galbraith very well knew meant "breakers ahead."

"Paulina, dear, you heard me?" she said, in her most dulcet tones. "Maud, ring for Paulina's maid. It is time to dress for the concert. There will be such a crush that it will be best to be early."

"Don't trouble yourself, Maud," said Paulina, quietly; "I shall not go."

"Not go, Paulina?"

Paulina laid down *Le Follet*, and looked across at her chaperone with steady blue eyes.

"I shall not go, Mrs. Galbraith. More—I will never go anywhere again with Lord Montalien. If he had come here to dine to-day I should have left the table. It is quite out of my power to forbid him

the house, or Sir Vane's box at the theatre, or you from picking him up whenever we go out to drive, but what it is in my power to do I will. It shall be no fault of mine if people couple our names together. I told Lord Montalien last night pretty plainly what I thought of him—now I tell you. Do not let my whims make any difference in your plans. You and Maud are both dying to go to the *début* of this new Mario. Go, by all means—I shall not."

Then she went back to *Le Follet*. All Mrs. Galbraith could say was of no avail. Miss Lisle's ultimatum had been spoken.

Lord Montalien called, and Mrs. Galbraith and Maud went with him to the concert. He listened with his calm smile to the story of Paulina's headstrong caprice.

"As the queen pleases," he said, with a shrug; "a little solitude will do her no harm. In half an hour she will be frantic that she has not come."

Would she? The instant the carriage drove away Paulina jumped up, flung *Le Follet* across the room, and rang a peal for her maid that nearly broke down the bell.

"Quick, Jane," she cried, "dress me in two minutes, and make me look as pretty as ever you can."

Her eyes were dancing now. She was little, wild, mischievous Polly Mason once more.

Jane was a well-trained English lady's-maid, and nothing under the canopy of heaven ever surprised her. She did dress her young mistress in ten minutes, and to perfection.

Paulina looked at herself in the glass, and saw that the flowing pink silk and the long, trailing cluster of lilies in her golden hair were exquisite. Diamond drops sparkled in her ears, soft illusion veiled the snow-white bust and arms. Her fan of pearl and rose silk, her bouquet of lilies and blush roses lay aside by her. She looked like a lily herself—tall, slim, fair.

"Now my opera cloak. Quick, Jane."

Jane flung it over her shoulders and the hood over her head. Miss Lisle drew on her gloves, gathered up her shimmering silken train, and swept out of the house with that dancing light in her eyes, that provoking smile on her lips.

She tripped down the front steps and along the lamp-lit street for a few yards. Then she rang the bell of a large house, and was admitted by a footman.

"Is Mrs. Atcherly at home?" she asked.

"What! Paulina!" exclaimed a lady, in the act of crossing the hall, in full evening dress—"here! alone! and at this hour! I thought you were going to the concert."

"So I am, dear Mrs. Atcherly, if you will take me. I would not miss it for a kingdom. You are quite ready, I see—how fortunate I am not to be too late."

"But, my love—Mrs. Galbraith—"

"Mrs. Galbraith has gone, and Maud and Lord Montalien. I'll tell you all about it as we go along. Please don't let us be too late."

Mrs. Colonel Atcherly, a stately matron, her daughter and her husband descended to the carriage. On the way Paulina whispered the story of her insubordination into the older lady's ear.

"You know how I detest Lord Montalien, Mrs. Atcherly. I couldn't go with him, and I should die—yes, I should, if I missed hearing the Signor Friellson. What will they say when they see me?"

"That you are a hare-brained damsel. What a lecture Mrs. Galbraith will read you to-morrow!"

They reached the Pavilion. The curtain had fallen upon the first part of the concert as the Atcherly party swept along to their box. Sir Vane's was nearly opposite, and the glasses of Lord Montalien and the baronet's sister fell together upon wicked Paulina.

"Good heavens!" Mrs. Galbraith gasped, "can I believe my eyes?"

Lord Montalien burst out laughing. Though the joke told against him, yet Mrs. Galbraith's face of horror was irresistibly comical.

"It is Paulina!" cried the lady. "Lord Montalien, is it possible you can laugh?"

"I beg a thousand pardons," the peer said, still laughing. "It is the best joke of the season! And, egad! she is more beautiful than ever I saw her!"

"She has the grace, at least, not to look this way. How dare she do so outrageous a thing! I will never forgive her!"

All the lognettes in the house turned to the Atcherly box—many to the great heiress—many more to the noble and lovely face. Captain Villiers left his seat in the stalls and joined her, and until the curtain finally fell an animated flirtation was kept up. Then Miss Lisle flung her bouquet to the successful tenor and took the guardaman's arm to the carriage.

"Mrs. Atcherly," she said, laughingly, "your goodness emboldens me to ask still another favour. Will you keep me all night? Perhaps, if Mrs. Galbraith sleeps on her wrath, it will fall less heavily upon me to-morrow."

Miss Lisle did not return home all night. Next morning Sir Vane returned, and was informed of the rebellious and unheard-of conduct of his ward.

The baronet's anger was scarcely less than that of his sister. He went at once for his ward; and no death's-head ever looked more grim than he as he led her home.

"And now, Miss Lisle," he asked, sternly, "may I demand an explanation of this disgraceful conduct?"

"Disgraceful, Sir Vane! I don't quite see that; I went to the concert because I wanted to go to the concert, and I did not go with Mrs. Galbraith because Lord Montalien was her escort. I hope that is satisfactory!"

"It is not satisfactory; I repeat it—your conduct has been disgraceful."

"Sir Vane, you may use that word once too often. Neither now nor at any future time shall Lord Montalien appear in public with me."

"Lord Montalien has done you the honour to propose to you. It is my desire—my command—that you shall accept him."

Miss Lisle smiled quietly, and took a seat.

"Lord Montalien has laid a complaint against me, has he? and my guardian's power is to be brought to bear in his favour? Sir Vane, take my advice, and spare yourself a great deal of useless rhetoric and breath. If Lord Montalien were the ruler of the world, and my life depended on it, I would lay my head on the block sooner than marry him; I hope that is conclusive! I will never step across his threshold, or sit at the same table with him. I will not go down to Montalien at Christmas. I hope that is conclusive!"

"Then hear me!" cried her guardian, white with anger. "Until you do speak to him, sit at the same table with him, and consent to marry him, you shall remain in your room watched. The escapade of last night shall not occur again. Solitary confinement, perhaps, will teach you obedience. Now go!"

Miss Lisle rose at once. He had expected an outburst of indignant protest and passion, but who was to judge this girl?

She got up with a provoking smile on her face, and walked straight out of the room. In the doorway she paused.

"I have only one request to make," she said, still with that provoking smile; "please don't feed me on bread and water. I shouldn't like to grow any thinner, and do be kind to poor little Pandora,"—her poodle. "For the rest, Sir Vane, I hear but to obey."

She went up to her rooms. She had three on the sunny southern side—bed-room, dressing-room, and sitting-room. She glanced around. Heaps of books and magazines were everywhere, heaps of Berlin wool and bead-work, heaps of music, and a piano. She rang the bell, and when her maid came she peeped out through a crevice in the door.

"Jane," she said, with solemnity, "I'm a prisoner here, and to prevent the possibility of my escape I am going to lock myself in! You will fetch me my meals, and when you want anything, Jane, you will rap, and tell me through the keyhole."

Sir Vane had followed her, and heard every word of this whimsical speech.

"What is to be done with such a girl as that?" the baronet demanded of his sister; "she is afraid of nothing—imprisonment—solitude—nothing, I say. Hear her now!"

Miss Lisle was seated at her piano, and her sweet singing echoed through the house.

"Paulina Lisle is dangerous," Mrs. Galbraith said, with emphasis; "that girl is capable of anything when fully aroused."

Mrs. Galbraith was right. She and her brother were speedily to learn of what Paulina Lisle was capable!

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was the twentieth of December.

Francis, Lord Montalien, rose from the luxurious dinner in his bachelor apartments, prepared by a first-rate French artist, and walked into his reception-room. Lord Montalien's lodgings on the sunny side of St. James's Street were rather more luxurious, if possible, than the apartments of a young duchess. Miser he might be, as Paulina Lisle had called him, but certainly not where his own comfort or gratification was concerned.

Velvet-piled carpets, Florentine bronzes, richest hangings, a profusion of hot-house flowers in the windows and on the tables, frescoed medallions of flowers and fruits on the walls, costly furniture in white and gold, books, pictures, bronzes, vases, cabinets, everything to gratify the eye that wealth could purchase, was here. Ruddy fires blazed on every hearth, wax-lights burned softly in all the rooms, and outside the December snow drifted in a white wilderness, and the December wind wildly howled.

His lordship was dressed in deep mourning, but in his gleaming eyes, and over his whole face, there glowed an exultant light of joy and triumph. He had been drinking more deeply than was his wont, for he was most abstemious, and his thin, pale face was flushed, and a perpetual smile hovered exultantly about his lips.

"Everything triumphs with me," he cried; "everything! When Paulina is my wife I shall have nothing left to wish for! Heavens! how I love that girl! Her beauty and her haughty pride, and pluck, and obstinacy, have bewitched my senses. I believe I would marry her if she had not one farthing. I shall prosper in my love as I have prospered in my hate! Ah! my brilliant, beautiful Guy Earlscount, how is it with you now?"

He paced up and down the exquisite room, that diabolical smile of exultation still wreathing his thin, sinister lips. He had come from a funeral but a few hours before, the funeral of his rich grand-aunt, Miss Earlscount. After the funeral the will had been read—the will that, to the utter amazement of everybody, save the lawyer and legate, left every shilling she possessed to her elder nephew, Lord Montalien. Guy had been cut off without even a guinea to buy a mourning-ring, "for his evil courses," the will pointedly said, the shameful courses which, for the first time, had brought disgrace on the name of Earlscount.

In that hour of triumph the elder brother had cast, in spite of himself, one glance of triumph at the disinherited favourite. Guy stood perfectly calm—it was his death-warrant he heard read, but not a muscle moved, his handsome face looked as serene, as coolly indifferent as though he had half a million or so at his banker's. And Lord Montalien had set his teeth, with an inward imprecation—he could not conquer him—in the hour of his downfall he rose above him still.

"I hate him!" he hissed; "I always hated him for his patrician beauty and languor, his noble air, as the women call it, and his insufferable insolence. And I hate him more now, in his utter downfall, than I ever did before. I wish he were here, that I might for once throw off the mask and tell him so."

The master he served seemed inclined to let him have his way in this as in all other things. The wish had scarcely taken shape when the door was flung open, and his groom of the chambers announced "Mr. Earlscount."

Lord Montalien paused in his walk, and, crossing over to the chimney-piece, leaned his arm upon it, and looked full at his brother, that exultant, Satanic smile yet bright on his face. He had this last desire, as he had had all others—the man he hated and whom he had helped to ruin stood before him in the dark hour of his life.

Guy came slowly forward, and stood directly opposite to him at the other end of the mantel. He too wore mourning, his face was very grave, very haggard, very pale. Dark circles surrounded his eyes, but that noble air, which his brother so hated, had not left him. He looked handsomer, nobler now in his utter downfall, beyond all comparison, than the wealthy, the well-reputed lord of Montalien. And Francis Earlscount saw it and knew it.

"Well, Guy," he began, slowly, "so the worst has come. Have you visited me to congratulate me, or to ask my sympathy for your own great misfortune? Who would have thought Miss Earlscount would have had the heart to disinherit her favourite?"

The mocking tone, the exultant look, were indescribable.

Guy lifted his dark eyes and looked steadily across at him.

"It must have been a tremendous blow," the elder continued; "it was your last hope. Perhaps, though, it is not your last hope; perhaps you have come to me to help you in your hour of need."

"No, Frank," Guy said, quietly, "I have fallen very low, but my misfortunes, or evil courses, which you will, have not quite turned my brain. I have never asked you for a farthing yet, and I never will."

"Yet you remember after our father's death I told you to come to me in your hour of need and I would assist you. You were your father's favourite, Guy; you are the son of the wife he loved; he left you all he had to leave. I wonder how he would feel if he saw you now."

"We will leave his name out of the discussion, if you please. And as neither now nor at any past time have I ever troubled your purse or your brotherly affection your hitting a man when he's down is in very bad taste, to say the least of it. I have come here to-night neither for sympathy nor money; I know how much of either I should get, or deserve to get. Shall I tell you why I have come?"

"By all means—to say farewell, perhaps, on the eve of your life-long exile. What place of refuge have you chosen—Algiers—Australia—New Zealand—America? I should really like to know!"

"I did not come to say farewell. I came to speak to you of—Alice Warren!"

The elder brother started at the unexpected sound of that name. Not once had he seen her since the night he had visited her at her lodgings.

"Alice Warren," he said, vehemently; "what has Alice Warren to do with it? Do you expect me to look after your cast-off mistresses when you are gone?"

"I expect nothing of you—nothing. How often must I repeat it? And Alice Warren is no mistress of mine—or any man's, I believe in my soul. Whatever she is you are the scoundrel who led her astray under promise of marriage. Hear me out, my lord. I have come to be heard, and will. If you have one spark of manhood left you will atone in some way for the great wrong you have done an innocent girl. You will not leave the fresh face you wooed down in Lincolnshire exposed to the disgrace of London gaslight."

"I shall do precisely as I please in this as in all other things. It is refreshing, really, to hear you, of all men, the defender of female innocence, of soiled doves, such as Alice Warren."

"At least no innocent girl's ruin lies at my door. I repeat, if you have one spark of manhood left you will atone for the wrong you have done her."

"And how?" said his lordship, with his sneering smile; "by a real marriage?—make the bailiff's daughter my Lady Montalien? May I ask when you had the pleasure of seeing the lady last, and if she commissioned you to come here and plead her cause?"

"I saw her two hours ago, and she commissioned me to do nothing of the sort. I was walking along the Strand with Gus Stedman, and we came face to face with poor Alice. I should not have known her—she has become such a wretched shadow of herself. If ever a heart was broken I believe hers to be. By Heaven, Frank, it is a cruel shame—if you had murdered her in cold blood you could not be more guilty than you are."

The sneering smile never left the other's face, though he was pallid with suppressed passion. He took up his cigar-case and lit a Manila, though his hands shook as he did it.

"She told you, no doubt, a piteous story of my betrayal and my baseness—or is all this accusation but the figment of your own lively brain?"

"She told me nothing—she is true to you, false as you have been to her. We scarcely exchanged words—she seemed to have something to say to Stedman, and I walked off, and left them. It is of no use your wearing a mask with me. When Alice Warren came up to London last September—poor, credulous child—it was to become your wife."

"You are right!" exclaimed Lord Montalien, suddenly; "and I will throw off the mask with you, my virtue-preaching younger brother! In that other land to which your misfortunes are driving you you might, with pleasure to yourself and profit to your hearers, turn itinerant parson—the rôle seems to suit you amazingly. I shall deal with Alice Warren exactly as I please, and, for marriage—I shall marry Paulina Lisle!"

"Poor Paulina!" Guy said, bitterly. "May Heaven keep her from such a fate!"

"You believe in Heaven? At least it has not dealt very kindly to you. I shall marry Paulina Lisle and her fortune; and it will be the delightful occupation of my life to crush that high spirit while you are breaking stones on the roads out there in Australia. For Alice Warren, she will fare none the better for your advocacy. Let us speak of yourself—I really feel an interest in your fate, though you may not believe it. You have sent in your papers to sell, I suppose? You are not mad enough to try and remain in England?"

Guy bowed his head in assent, and turned to go. "Pray do not be in such haste—I have not half finished what I desire to say to you. Have you chosen as yet the place of your outlawry?"

"The place of my outlawry is a matter that in no way concerns you."

"Very true; and what does it signify? America, Australia, Algeria—it is all the same. But don't you feel a curiosity to know how you came to be disinherited? Most men would, I think, and you were such a favourite with old Miss Earlscount, as with all women, young and old, indeed."

"Through your brotherly kindness, Frank, no doubt."

"Quite right—through my brotherly kindness. But for me you would to-day be heir to our lamented aunt's large fortune, able to snap your fingers in the face of the Jews, and marry Paulina Lisle yourself, if you desired it. Our aunt was ready to forgive you, seventy times seven, to pay your debts to the end of the chapter, and leave you all when she died—but for me!—but for me. Shall I tell you, Guy, how I did it?"

"If you please."

"By means of the girl whose case you have come here to plead—by means of Alice Warren. Your

gambling, your drinking, your mad extravagance in every way she was prepared to forgive and condone, but not the luring from home under pretence of marriage, and ruin of a young and virtuous girl, whose father—all his life had loved and served you and yours! I went to Miss Earls court two weeks ago, my brilliant, careless Guy, and I told her this. I made her believe this, the only thing that could have ruined you; and that night she tore up the will that left you all—you hear—all!—and made me her heir."

He paused. Satan himself, triumphing over a lost soul, could not have looked more diabolically exultant. Guy listened, his elbow on the marble mantel, his calm, pale face unmoved, his eyes fixed steadfastly on his only brother's face.

"You did this!" he said, slowly. "I know you always hated me, but I did not—no, I did not think, base as I know you to be, that you were capable of this, Frank." Then, with a sudden change of tone he added—"Will you tell me why you have hated me? I have been a worthless fellow, but I never injured you."

"Did you not?" Lord Montalien ground out, with suppressed rage. "Why, I believe I have hated you from your cradle! You were the Isaac, I the Ishmael; you the petted, the caressed, the admired—I the unlicked cub, the unloved son of an unloved mother! I have hated you for that beauty which women have so admired—for the talents and accomplishments that have rendered you a favourite with men; and I vowed to have revenge, and I have had it. Your brilliant life is over; you are a beggar; you go forth to exile and outlawry and disgrace—to starve or work in a foreign land! The title and the wealth and the good repute are mine! Has more to be said? I will marry Paulina Lisle before the next London season, and Alice Warren may go, as you have gone, to perdition! Mr. Guy Earls court, permit me to wish you good-night!"

He rang the bell.

"Show Mr. Earls court to the door," he said to the servant, "and admit him here no more!"

He could not forbear this last insult. With one look—a look not soon to be forgotten—Guy went forth, never to cross that threshold again.

"Now for Berkeley Square and Paulina!" exclaimed Lord Montalien, taking up his great-coat. "We will see what frame of mind that obstinate little beauty is in to-night!"

But he was not to go yet. The door opened once more, and the groom of the chambers appeared with a disturbed countenance.

"My lord, there is a young person here who says she must see you. I have remonstrated—"

He stopped aghast. The young person had had the audacity to follow him, and stood now upon the threshold.

It was Alice!

"That will do, Robinson! I will see this woman! Go!"

The groom of the chambers vanished, closing the door after him and dropping the heavy curtain of crimson cloth that effectually shut in every sound; and Alice, wan as a specter, covered with snow, with wild eyes and ghastly face, stood before Lord Montalien in all his splendour. His face was literally black with rage. He hated her, he loathed her; he had forbidden her in the most emphatic manner ever to write to him or intrude upon him, and she had had the audacity to force her way here!

"How dare you!" he said, under his breath, as he always spoke when his passion was greatest—"how dare you come here?"

She was trembling with cold. She was miserably clad and fatigued, but he offered her no chair, did not bid her approach the fire. She remained standing near the door, her face, awfully corpse-like, turned upon him.

"Why have you come here?" he thundered. "Speak at once—why have you dared to come here?"

"I have come for justice, Lord Montalien. I am your wife, and you leave me to starve! I am your wife, and an outcast from home and friends! Frank! Frank!"—her voice rising to a shrill cry—"I have not seen you for six weeks—I had to come here—I should have gone mad or died if I had not come!"

"It is a pity you did not!" he brutally answered. "Go mad and die!—the sooner the better; but don't come tormenting me with the sight of your miserable white face."

She clasped both hands over her heart and staggered as though he had given her a blow; her lips moved, but no sound came forth.

"What do you mean by coming here for justice, as you call it?" he went on. "Justice means money, I suppose. Well, here are ten guineas—take them, and pay your bill, and begone!"

She rallied again; after an effort one or two words came from her ashen lips:

"I came for justice, and I must have it—I am

your wife—your lawful, wedded wife—why, then, are you trying to marry Paulina Lisle?"

He strode a step towards her, then stopped.

"Who has told you this?" he cried, with suppressed fury.

"Mr. Stedman. I met him to-day—he told me you were engaged to marry Paulina Lisle, and would marry her. Frank, it must not, shall not be! I can bear a great deal, but not that. I love Paulina; she shall never be ruined as I have been. You shall own me before the world as what I am—your lawful wife—or I will go to her and tell her all!"

There was that in her face, in her eyes, in her tone, a firmness, a resolution, he had never seen there before. The crushed worm had turned; he knew she meant what she had said.

"You will do this!" he exclaimed, hoarsely.

"I swear I will! My heart is broken, my life ruined—that is past hope—you hate me, and wish to cast me off. But she shall be saved—my good name shall be saved. Unless before this year ends you promise to proclaim me your wife I will go to Paulina Lisle and tell her all."

"Then go!" he burst forth, in his fury; "go—weak, drivelling, miserable idiot! My wife! Why, you have never been that for one hour, for one second. The man who married us was no clergyman, but a worthless, drunken vagrant, who entered into the plot with Stedman and me. My wife! Fudge! I was mad enough, but never half so insane as to do that! Now you know the truth at last. Go to your friend Mr. Stedman, and he will endorse my words."

There was a chair near her—she grasped it to keep from falling, and in the height of his mad fury he had to shift away from the gaze of the large, horror-stricken eyes.

"Not his wife!" she whispered; "not his wife!"

"Not my wife, I swear it! I did not mean to tell you until I got you quietly out of the country, but as well now as later. And mark you—if you go near Paulina Lisle—I will—kill you!"

(To be continued.)

VICTOR AND VANQUISHED.

CHAPTER XXX.

Oh, heavy hour!
Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
Of sun and moon; and that the affrighted globe
Should yawn at alteration. *Shakespeare.*

THE unfinished letter fell from Lucia's hands—a fearful and death-like pallor overspread her countenance. One might almost say that her hair rose up and withered at the roots.

She muttered, in a hollow voice:

"I have seen the wound; I have seen the image traced. Great Heaven! he is convicted!"

She looked about her with almost an idiotic stare, as if she strove in vain to recall where she was or what had happened, then she gave a low cry as new evidence seemed to occur to her.

"Have I not seen a cord—and beaded at the end?" she muttered, almost grinding her small, beautiful teeth in her intense horror; "yes, a cord that he suffered me to touch! Where is it? Come—come!"

Mechanically beckoning Badoura and Watt Slygreen to follow, she walked like a person in a dream along the long gallery to the apartments which had been assigned to Captain La Mort.

The door was wide open—a pile of boxes lay packed, and evidently waiting transportation, and many articles belonging to La Mort were scattered about.

"I saw him throw it here!" she whispered to herself, then she pulled open a door which led into a long and narrow clothes-room still well stocked with apparel.

She gazed upon the floor of this gloomy receptacle as if expecting to see the object of her search there, then she took a step forward and looked with breathless attention at something upon the wall.

It was a long, dark Spanish cloak of peculiar make, with hanging sleeves.

But what she gazed at was a rent in the front, about the size of a man's hand.

The livid shadow of death was upon that strained face and wide-staring eyes as she walked from the presence of the anxious ambassadors to her own chamber.

What had she gone to do?

Watt, sorely puzzled, handled the garment and searched the pockets.

Ah, here was a beaded cord, all black and rigid with the blood of victims!

Was it the horror of this conviction that had overwhelmed Lucia?

While he held it in his hand back came Miss Chastelard with a small fragment of dark cloth.

She only glanced at the cord with an unseeing eye, and, crouching, spread the cloak upon her knee and placed the fragment within the rent.

It fitted accurately!

The quick eye of Badoura discovered a pocket which Watt had overlooked; she pointed it out to the lady, and Lucia drew forth two letters.

One was the first letter which Hereward had written to her; the other was scrawled in these words:

"MONSIEUR LE BARON—DEAR FRIEND—I have already removed your enemy—Hereward is dead. Meeting him unexpectedly, we came to words, and he fell in open duel; thus your trap-stair is unnecessary."

The papers I am not so sure of, as I dare not go near the Tower while Hereward's friends are gathering round it to witness his entry. I must beg of you to meet me at Godiva's Tryste, where I will give you proofs of Hereward's death, and you can describe the papers to me again.

"Yours, with faithfulness,

"LA MORT."

A long and terrible shriek burst from the baron's daughter; she held up her shaking hands to Heaven in an agony of denunciation.

"Good Heaven!" she said, in a death-like voice, "I have married my father's murderer!"

An astounded silence followed this declaration; it was as if a thunderbolt had fallen.

Badoura clasped her hands, and the slow tears of anguished compassion began to roll down her cheeks as she contemplated the position of the terror-stricken lady before her.

"His bride! oh, my poor brain!" shrieked the unfortunate victim. "The Phœnix! the assassin of my father! Oh, my lost soul! Save me—save me!"

"Blessed lady, calm thyself," sobbed Badoura, falling on her knees; "surely some way of escape will be afforded thee!"

"Ah!" breathed Lucia, suddenly stilling her wild exclamations and gazing with glassy eyes on vacancy; "I see now the reason for the hurried wedding beside my father's coffin—the hasty preparations for departure; he schemed for my father's wealth and for me, and thought to take me away before his crimes should be discovered. All day long has he been conveying his plunder to the ship in the bay; and now he comes, red with the blood of Chastelard, to take his daughter—and I have no refuge. I am his wife, whom he looked into her chamber that she should not be missing when he returned!"

In convulsive gasps these words were uttered, while wild changes passed over the lady's corpse-like visage. She plucked uneasily at the pearls around her throat, as if the light necklaces were choking her.

The Indian maiden, still kneeling, encircled her twitching figure with a tight clasp. Her dark, upturned face was the holiest thing on earth; it was damp with anguish for her rival's grief.

"Hereward loves thee! Hereward will save thee!" sobbed Badoura.

"Come, Miss Lucia, darling," exclaimed Slygreen, through clenched teeth; "Master Hereward's your nearest of kin, and he'll revenge your wrongs. Come with us before La Mort returns!"

The lady started up, as if just awaking, and looked at her rich white drapery in surprise.

"Great Heaven! am I a bride?" she uttered, in a sharp voice—"I, Lucia, who loved another so deeply? What a misfortune!"

She held up her left hand, curious to see if it looked as of yore.

She saw a heavy golden circlet on the third finger, and drew her lips back from her set teeth, while her eyes dilated fearfully, as if a serpent's eye had met hers.

Then, with a terrific laugh and a white foam forming on her once beautiful lips, she tore the ring from her finger and dashed it upon the floor, grinding it beneath her feet with a fury born of frenzy.

"Aha!" she cried, with a gleeful and ghastly triumph, "I am free—from once more! Now where is Hereward? Ah, I need not ask! He will protect poor Lucia from her murderer bridegroom; I shall find him where Godiva found her lover, and we will never part again."

With these startling words, doubly startling as no one had informed her where Hereward awaited the return of his messengers, she bounded up and away from the tower.

With a yell of terror Watt Slygreen rushed after her.

With an affrighted waving of her slight hand to heaven, as if imploring protection upon the distracted one, Badoura followed, fleet as the rock-goat of Arabia.

The heavens had grown dark; a horrid pall was stretching over the sky; that thrilling calmness which precedes the tempest made the earth seem like one vast Morgue.

The cliff was covered with a blood-red hue; the sparse leaves and wiry grasses which starved upon the barren soil quivered in the sinister electric current.

The waves at the foot of the cliffs hung motionless in molten curves, as if petrified. There was no wind, no breath, no sound. She fitted on before, that lady

in her marriage flowers—that delicate being who had never climbed those frowning cliffs before; she flitted safely, surely over the winding path, straight towards Godiva's Tryste.

Watt tore after; he was panting, he was breathless, he was racing like a stag.

Badoura, the fleet of foot, rushed like the wind. They never gained an inch upon her.

Heaven help them! was it a spirit which they pursued?

She who was bright Lucia had gained the Tryste. The sea was black as death, the sky lowered close, great, frightened birds flapped their wings as they circled about, seeking a refuge; confused cries of beasts and the buzz of insects filled the air, and Hereward stood on the narrow stone causeway called Godiva's Tryste, gazing down into the pool which was bottomless.

He heard no sound, but felt something at his side. He turned to behold his Lucia; she held out her arms—oh, days of joy! she was his own.

But clinging to his breast, with wild, cold hands, hark! what said Lucia?

"Let me die here, Hereward, my love, my brave chevalier, for ever and ever, for I have married La Mort!"

He gazed—to describe that look—no! mortal may not do it! He looked up into the ink-black sky with a faint and bitter smile; the heavens parted, a blinding flash played over Godiva's Tryste.

The shout of the horsemen on the plateau above was drowned, the yell of the dwarf and the shriek of the Hindoo maid were unheard in the deafening roar of the thunder which followed.

One moment two clasping forms were seen, whose last unspeakable glance of love was imprinted for ever upon their memories by the intense and vivid flash, the next they were falling—falling!

Roll'd in one another's arms,

And silent in a last embrace!

Godiva's Tryste was empty!

CHAPTER XXXI.

The loud wind never reached the ship;

Yet now the ship moved on!

Beneath the lightning and the moon

The dead men gave a groan. *Coleridge.*

THE shouts, the shrieks, the howls of agony rang on, long after the thunder-peal was spent; and, while yet the rocks were ringing to the death-wail, a shout from other voices seemed to take up the cries of consternation and echo them wildly.

Round the promontory, which ran needle-like into the sea, dividing the dread pool from the bay, flitted a ghost-like apparition. The wan light whitened its sails—its sails that hang so limp and loose that they dangled against the mast—and, with neither wind nor ripple to drift it, it glided to the music of human terror into the dreaded pool which scarce had swallowed the entwined forms of Hereward and Lucia.

Watt, lying on the shattered ledge which late had held his master, with starting eyes gazed to the molten well beneath; Badoura, kneeling beside him with her blanched face turned to the sky and her spirit about to flee from her tortured bosom; the horsemen grouped in motionless attitudes upon the plateau above—all started from their trance and looked upon the terrible mystery.

Whence came the power that urged that ship without wind or wave into this lifeless pool?

There were men in the shrouds, men writhing round the rigging, men paralyzed upon the deck—they seemed smitten all by one stroke. There was not a movement in the shrouds, in the rigging, or on the deck; the arms of the man at the wheel hung idle as the sails; and still the ship floated in nearer and nearer, while the thunder-clouds stooped close and wrapped the mast-head in an inky pall.

La Mort, the Phansegar, stood on the fore-deck alone. His visage was indistinctly seen in the judgment-like gloom, but it seemed bent towards the threatening waters in a dream of astonishment.

Now appeared a terrific phenomenon.

The ship having glided once round the rim of this bowl, repeated the circle on a smaller circumference, once, twice, thrice—then faster, faster—still narrowing the circle—still sinking a little deeper, until it seemed whirling upon a pivot in the midst of the enchanted pool.

An intense silence accompanied this extraordinary spectacle, for the cries of astonishment and awe had ceased, and every soul upon the marked ship was eyeing the sinister waters with the frozen stare of insanity.

Suddenly a livid and serpentine flash scored the blackness above, and played for a moment like a dead-light round the top of the mast, and the man upon the fore-deck staggered to his knees with a loud, hoarse cry.

Looking up, he saw the group upon the cliff, vividly distinct in the sepulchral ray, and he stretched his arms towards them as if for life.

Badoura rose from her knees, and answered that dumb appeal by a wild laugh which curled her white lips apart, and she pointed mockingly up to the

sulphurous clouds in an attitude of frenzied vengeance.

"Save me! I am going to perdition!" shrieked the victim below.

"Heaven sends thee there!" was her solemn response.

A roll of thunder drowned all voices; the doomed ship stood as if stunned for a moment, then whirled round swift as lightning. And, as if in one last frantic appeal for help, a boom of cannon came up from the ship, even as the black water cozed over the deck and gurgled into the hatches.

Down, down she sank, lit to her dark bed by the tremulous flare of lightning; down, with all sails set, and tortured forms clinging to the shrouds; down, with mast straight as a poplar, down into the bottomless gulf, until every vestige was effaced in a whirling flood of bubbles.

Horrid stillness succeeded this overwhelming panorama. Calm as ever lay the Pool of Death beneath the cliff, and a few warm drops of rain splashed heavily down.

The heavens parted in two pallid scrolls, and a flash descended. All the land suddenly awoke from its deathly torpor; dry water-courses filled with turbulent torrents, the trees bowed down before a mighty, rushing wind, the cliffs resounded to the boom of the awakened ocean-surf; the scene was changed to a moaning hurricane.

"Heavens above!" screamed Watt: "the end of the world has come! I thought it when Master Hereward went over," and he grasped the rigid form of the Hindoo maid and hurried away with her from the edge of the chasm.

"Ho, ho!" roared the tempest, wrestling with the puny being on the slippery ledge.

"Ho, ho!" boomed the waters, lashing twenty feet high to catch their prey.

Watt, bent double, and with Badoura in his arms, ran, gnome-like, up the scarp to the plateau.

Like smoke before a breeze the horsemen were skurrying downward to the shelter of the valley.

"Come on! Come on, old man!" shouted Watt, blows like a feather past Seyd Ally, who was clinging with his hands to a lichened cleft.

The Gentoo, seeing his mistress, bounded up; his loose garb caught the wind and floated wide, the blinding spray dashed on his face and bewildered him; he reeled, threw his long arms in a vain attempt to save himself, and fell backward over the edge of the plateau.

"One more gone!" groaned Watt, flying like a storm-spirit, with his beautiful captive, before the resistless blast.

So raged the tempest all that night, but the morning broke beautiful as heaven.

Into the midst of an excited multitude, who were gathered in the inn, staggered a drenched and woeful figure with an unconscious girl in his arms, who placed his burden on a settle near the fire and instantly fell down senseless.

It was the faithful dwarf of young Hereward, the departed.

With sobs, with broken praises, with pious zeal they cared for the two who loved Hereward so faithfully; and the best that old Jeffreys had to offer was not good enough for them, nor was the proudest of the villagers too important to wait on them.

For Hereward was dead—their young Baron Kentigorne, the last of his race.

In his flower—in his near-approaching triumph—a blind fate had snatched their young master from their head. Oh, black, black day for Kentigorne!

In the midst of this mourning a fisherman came in with strange and awful tidings.

He had been passing a gully three miles inland, where a salt river burst apparently out of the depths of the mountain—a river which had long been considered miraculous by the superstitious country people.

He had found fragments of broken spars thrown up on the rocks, and the dead body of La Mort, the Phansegar, stripped as if by human hands, and broken in every bone.

Upon the forehead of this ghastly corpse was printed into the flesh a black cross!

This mysteriously marked body was still to be seen on the bank of the river if the evil spirits which without doubt had transported it thither out of the Black Pool had not carried it away.

Not to detail all the wild surmises which this news gave rise to among the awe-stricken people, let us try to explain by what natural causes these phenomena occurred.

The pool beneath Godiva's Tryste had a subterranean outlet, which ran through the bowels of the mountain, and emerged three miles inland into a gorge, which led eventually through the marshlands and back to the sea.

When La Mort's ship was drawn into the hidden whirlpool by the current it was seized upon from below and forced through the subterranean river with great violence.

Only a few fragments and the body of the Phansegar reached the outlet of the stream—all else

was either crushed to atoms or wedged among the rocks.

The mystic black cross upon the forehead of the dead man was doubtless a photograph by lightning of the black cross which was on the flag of the fated ship.

It is well known to science that the exact impression of objects struck by lightning has been found upon the bodies over which the electric fluid has passed next; so at the moment when La Mort, smitten to his knees, looked up in anguish the pale flash which encircled the mast-head painted by a hand swifter than any sun-picture that indelible cross as if to brand his sin-stained brow with the symbol of Christianity which he had held in derision.

While the villagers were whispering together in terrified murmurs over the judgment-like doom of the Phansegar the Indian maid appeared among them from the room where they had supposed her sleeping.

For a moment she glanced over the collected people, as if seeking for him who should have been at their head, and, seeing him not, she threw a long, bright gaze into the distance.

Such an asking, eager look it was! They thought the creature had gone mad; and rough cheeks were wet for her.

But, as if those bright eyes had seen that for which they gazed, Baboura gathered up her filmy robes, and floated spirit-like through their midst, taking the way to the Tower.

In pitying silence, respecting her affliction, several of the men followed her to guard her from the suicidal frenzy which they feared would assail her.

She walked swiftly to the old Tower gate, and, passing it, traced the path by which Lucia de Chastelard had gone to Godiva's Tryste.

Faster and faster Badoura flew as she neared the scene of the tragedy, until, reaching the fatal ledge, she stood like a stone, eyeing the treacherous pool.

A something stirred at last that agonizing look of suspense—a wondering, rapturous smile broke over her visage; with ear aside, and dark eyes pulsating, she seemed to listen to some impalpable strain which was charming her as no earthly music ever charmed before.

CHAPTER XXXII.

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour

and a light,

As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the

northern light.

Locksley Hall.

Was she mad?

By Heaven! no!

There was something in the air—that light breeze that passed them—did it not seem as if it bore upon it a sound?

They caught each other's hands and bent over the shelving abyss, listening as the girl had listened, but incredulously.

Again!

A long, light, moaning echo was heard—only an echo, but whence came it?

One stalwart fellow stepped forward, and, with voice quaking like a timid child, asked:

"What is't we hear, miss?"

She looked round with her wild, beaming smile, half insane indeed.

"Come!" she said, in Hindostanee, but her expressive gesture said "Come" in language which the slowest there could understand, and she darted like a chamois along the dizzy ledge, while the men fearfully followed.

At last, by incredible means they gained the foot of the crag, and stood upon a foot's width of sand, with a measureless depth of water before them.

Badoura, with her ear bent to the glassy sheet, listened again, and a human voice in anguish rose from the bosom of the deep, and called and called again:

"Badoura! Badoura! Badoura!"

A shriek of joy burst from the girl, a tremendous shout from the men; one fleet-footed fellow rushed from the place and away to the village like a madman; the rest stood breathless after their shouting, and listened amazedly for the voices again.

"Badoura!" called the sweet voice of their own young master, faintly and anxiously.

The Hindoo maid clasped her dark hands together, and lifted her enraptured eyes to heaven.

"My sahib calls me!" she murmured, "and I obey!"

She plunged into the gulf before a hand could stay her. In horror they watched the inky waters close over her shining head, and waited in vain for her to rise.

A giant current had seized her instantly and dragged her down, down, down; and snaked her inward and outward until at last she rose and was hurled against some slimy rocks.

Astonished, the girl clung to the rocks and looked about her; she was in total darkness, and on the edge of a subterranean water-fall, which fell with a hollow roar into a stone basin far below. All at



[GODIVA'S TRYSTE.]

once a voice sobbed at her ear, then two voices raised themselves in, one wild cry.

"Badoura! help!"

"The sahib!" shrieked Badoura, frenzied with joy.

Instantly a torrent of sobs answered her, and she was dragged from her perilous position by her faithful Seyd Ally, and supported along a smooth, sandy floor to where Lucia de Chastelard reclined, her head upon Hereward's arm.

"My faithful friend!" cried Hereward, pressing her cold, wet hands, "how came you here?"

"Oh, Badoura!" sobbed Lucia, wrapping her soft arms around the dark maiden, "how did you dare to seek us here?"

"Sahib Hereward, and beloved lady," answered Badoura, simply, "I thought you had gone to heaven, and I went to seek you there. Is this the Christian's heaven?"

Young Hereward laughed excitedly at this, and pressed her anew to his breast, vowing that, black as it was, it was a Paradise if love could make it so; and the sweet white lady said so too, while she kissed the dark cheek of the maiden, and the Gentoo mumbled in hysterical joy over his mistress's garments. Hereward explained all he knew of their marvellous escape, which was not much.

His senses forsook him as he struck the water after their frightful descent from Godiva's Tryste, and when he recovered consciousness he was lying with Lucia in his arms upon the sandy bank of the underground river.

How they got there he could not tell, until Seyd, who had been blown off the plateau to the very spot where they had been plunged in, was dragged in by the current, and saved by Hereward just as he was about to be dashed over the rocks into the stone basin formed by the cataract.

Judging from the fact that there was plenty of air to breathe, they had come to the conclusion that there was some mode of egress or ingress besides the submarine passage; but they had not yet been able to discover it.

They had huddled close together, scarcely hoping to be discovered in time to save them; and as the hours stole on Seyd had told them how La Mort had gone down in the enchanted whirlpool with all his men.

A single scream of joy broke from the half-crazed bride when she heard this, and she twined her arms round Hereward, saying:

"I have the right to die here upon your breast, my love!"

Then she withdrew from his passionate embrace and knelt on the sand, and prayed Heaven's forgiveness for her wicked joy.

But the time had passed quickly after that, for the bitterness of death was past. Now and again they had all raised their voices together with the faint hope of being heard, and now the alarm was raised and they had a chance of being rescued after all.

While they waited anxiously the faint sound of dull blows upon the rock fell on the keen ear of the Hindoo maiden, and she attracted their attention to it by a hissing exclamation.

Oh, the thrill of hope that ran through their hearts when the far-off reverberations became audible to them! They clasped each other's hands and sat in a trance of silence—too weak to speak, too fearful to breathe, too joyful to do aught but weep!

The crashing was steadily continued; it penetrated nearer and nearer; the prisoners gave a glad cry, which the rescuers heard; a frenzied shout of rapture was the answer; and the crashing went on fifty-fold.

Hours passed; so weak were the captives, and so exhausted, that they slept in the midst of the din, while Badoura guarded them fondly, and directed the efforts of the rescuers by her cries.

At last a burst of light illumined the mysterious prison, a huge fragment of stone plunged into the water, and through the aperture peered a flushed, haggard face, whose eyes shone green as a mastiff's—the loyal physique of Mr. Slygreen.

A yelp of ecstasy testified that he had seen his master, and a roar of triumph burst from twenty strident throats.

Hereward awoke, saw the blessed light, and, trembling with joy, awoke his darling Lucia by a passionate kiss.

"Saved, my angel!" she murmured, waking with a smile, and laid her sweet face on his breast, half fainting with a sense of her own bliss.

"Oh, Master Hereward, my blessed boy!" shouted Watt, squeezing his lithe body half through the aperture with outstretched hands, and thereby plunging the captives into total darkness.

"All right, old fellow," returned Hereward, laughing; "only get out of our light, will you? and see if that wall won't come down a bit, for really we are all tired of our lodgings."

"Heaven be praised! I'll become a good Christian from this day," wildly vowed Watt, in his enthusiasm, and, wriggling out again, dealt such Titanic blows upon the stone that ere long the shell crashed down into the water, leaving a narrow ledge between the outer and the inner pool upon which some half-dozen men were standing drenched with perspiration, and grinning ecstatically.

One joyful cheer they uttered, then rushed forward.

Leaping into the sides of the cave, they surrounded Hereward and Lucia, and seizing them in strong arms carried them victoriously out of the jaws of death!

Nor were Badoura or Seyd left behind in that glad procession.

They carried the maidens breast high so that not a drop of the greedy waves might touch them more; and, supporting their dear young chief and the loyal old Gentoo, they ascended toilsomely but merrily the difficult passes until they reached the plateau.

So they brought him to the Tower, their own dear Baron Kentigerna, and all the town came out to meet and welcome him on the way; and when they saw how he loved Lucia de Chastelard, and how she loved him, they nobly forgot that she came of a cruel stock, and welcomed her for their baroness with exceeding joy.

Old men tottered up to Hereward who had loved his father long ago, and they kissed his feet, and placed his strong young hand upon their white heads, and, weeping, went away content.

The great Tower banqueting-hall was grim no more, for the kingly young chief held high revel there with his vassals all around him.

He sat at the head of a royal feast, the board glittering with silver and flowers and wine.

At his side sat a bride in her robes of snow, and orange crown, with her long, bright hair showering goldenly about her dainty waist.

On his other hand sat the Hindoo girl, filleted with roses like a Roman banqueter—her lovesome eyes radiant with generous contentment that her sahib was alive and happy.

Behind were grouped Watt with goblin glee, and Seyd, soft eyed and faithful, and many another loyal heart, beating high with love of Hereward.

Around the table sat the men and women of Kentigerna, rejoicing in that the brightest day of their lives, when they saw at their head their own lawful lord and his beauteous bride.

They toasted the lovely baroness.

"Love, happiness, prosperity, to our young Lady Kentigerna!"

Hereward stole from his Lucia a burning, passionate glance, all fire and ecstasy. They toasted their lion-hearted baron.

"No more tyranny, no more bondage, no more grinding injustice!"

How they roared it in accents stentorian, but with eyes brimming over from happy hearts!

"Long life to our kind Baron Kentigerna! Heaven bless Hereward! Heaven bless Hereward! Hurrah!"

THE END.



[CONFISCATION.]

BREAKING THE CHARM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"*Tempting Fortune*," "*Scarlet Berries*," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

I have had playmates, and have had companions. In my days of childhood, in my joyful schooldays, all are gone—the old familiar faces. Lamb.

ONLY those who have gone away from home and friends to take up a residence among utter strangers, and by their exertions and circumspect behaviour obtain a scanty pittance, can thoroughly sympathize with our heroine as she was driven from the railway-station in a hack fly to the stately residence of the Duke of Lewes.

She could already divide her existence into three periods. The first was when she was happy and innocent in her humble home at Chertsey; the second was her abrupt transition from the country to May Fair and the strange life of intrigue and unrest she had been leading ever since; while the third period was about to commence with her taking service in the household of the duke.

It was really like beginning life anew, but with a courage that has animated many a young girl in a similar position she looked forward to a season of calm and peace, if not happiness, for she had a right to expect such contentment as industry and good conduct invariably bring in their train.

It was the commencement of autumn as she was driven up the long avenue of venerable trees, through which the mansion of his grace was approached, and the leaves were in places already beginning to change their fresh and matured hue of summer previous to their discolouration and fall. Herds of deer browsed upon the irrent pastures of the spacious park; and sheets of water, cunningly designed as lakes, glittered in the shimmering sheen of the pleasant sunshine.

Milly thought how delightful it was to have the privilege of strolling in that lovely park. There were a thousand beauties for the admirer of nature to ponder over and gaze entranced upon. Secluded dells, covered with sweet-smelling wild flowers, offered a seductive retreat for one tired with walking, who, book or needlework in hand, might count the fleeting hours glide by, and never feel a moment of weariness.

Presently the house itself was disclosed to view, by a turn in the road, which wound agreeably through the park. A venerable mansion it was, built in that striking though perhaps not strictly beautiful style of the Plantagenets, when the solid and

the useful were more studied and sought after than the ornamental and the florid which have obtained favour and followers during more modern times. Large blocks of buildings, consisting of stables, laundry, brewhouse and other offices, stretched out in the rear, being partly hidden by trees; and for the first time in her life Milly began to have an idea of the vast extent of the house of one of our rich noblemen.

In such a large, rambling place as it seemed to be she feared she would be lost. Then she wondered what her duties would consist of, and how she would be treated when an inmate of the castle, as it was still called, though its distinctive features, as a castellated fortress, had long since passed away, and time, together with its ally, decay, had necessitated many a patch, in the shape of a wall here, a wing there, or a pile of strong buttresses to keep up the stones of some tottering tower.

While she was in the midst of her speculations the fly stopped, a large bell rang with a dismal clang, and a footman, resplendent in a handsome livery of blue and silver, handed her out of the carriage with an air of deference, mixed with a well-bred politeness that was not without a reassuring charm.

"If, as I suppose, *Miss*, you are the young lady expected by his grace," said the domestic, "you will please to walk into Mrs. Cotteram's apartment."

"Thank you!" said Milly; "will you kindly see to my luggage? There are two boxes and some parcels, and if you can show me the way I shall be obliged."

This, however, was no part of the footman's duties. He waved his hand grandly to a maid who was waiting in the hall, and replied:

"That is Mrs. Cotteram's maid;" then he waved his hand again in the direction of the fly, and said, still more grandly:

"There is one of the stable-men, who will convey your luggage upstairs, miss."

Milly had to learn that in large establishments there is a servant for almost every trifling duty, and one will not do another's work. The footman helped Milly out of the fly and told her where to go, but he would never have dreamed of showing her the way to the housekeeper's room or of taking her luggage upstairs.

Rather awed by the stately grandeur she observed on all sides of her, Milly followed the maid through long corridors, and up and down short flights of steps, until the apartments occupied by the duke's housekeeper were reached.

Her sitting-room was furnished very handsomely with quaintly carved oak furniture, black with age;

paintings of undoubted genius and great value were suspended from the walls. Twice a week the gardener brought her greenhouse flowers to stand in parts of the room; a table was carelessly littered with new novels, and all the favourite magazines and periodicals of the day, so that it was easy to see that Mrs. Cotteram was a personage of some importance in the duke's household.

Left to herself, Milly had time to remark all that was worthy of notice, for Mrs. Cotteram kept her waiting quite twenty minutes before she condescended to make her appearance; this was done, probably, to impress her with a due sense of her dignity.

At length she appeared, and Milly saw before her a middle-aged woman, with a red face, which was plentifully sprinkled with powder. The face, however, was not an unpleasant one, though, being a shrewd observer of character, Milly could see that Mrs. Cotteram's besetting sin was vanity. She was proud of herself, of her position in the duke's household, and of the little money which she had contrived to save, which rendered her independent and able to retire whenever she chose. Her dress was gorgeous in the extreme, being a handsome and heavy brocade silk. A watch chain, at once massive and elegant, encircled her neck in a double fold, and large drops were pendant from her ears, while rings glittered on her fingers, and she had silver buckles on her shoes.

When she first saw this superb creature Milly could scarcely refrain from laughing, but prudence dictated the utmost respect, and, controlling her inclination, she rose and stood modestly before Mrs. Cotteram, who looked her over from head to foot in a manner which in commercial phrase would be called "taking stock."

The examination was apparently satisfactory, for she sat down, keeping Milly standing, and said, in a pompous voice:

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Miss Haines. You come with a very high recommendation from Mr. Biddles, in whom, as a gentleman and a lawyer, his grace and I have the utmost confidence. To him have I entrusted the investment of my small fortune. But that is neither here nor there. I am told that you are an accomplished musician. Sit down, if you please, at that piano and give me an example of your skill. If you cannot play without notes you will find all sorts of modern music in the rack."

Milly walked to the piano and played for about half an hour, when Mrs. Cotteram graciously told her she might leave off.

"Very good!" she said. "Come and stand before

me. It is as well that you should learn to treat me with respect at the commencement of our acquaintance. In this house I, after the duke, am the chief, and as his grace leaves everything to me I may call myself the head, for I engage all the servants and discharge them. I give all orders, and nothing is done without my consent. I could procure your dismissal before you had been twenty-four hours here, though I hope we shall agree, as you are apparently a modest, well-behaved girl."

"Thank you, I trust I shall always give you satisfaction," said Milly.

"Let us hope so. I am glad that you are proficient in the charming art of music, as the duke will listen for hours together to the piano. When I was young the accomplishments of French and music were not thought of so much as they are now. Can you sing? If so, oblige me by showing me what you can do."

Again Milly sat down at the instrument and sang till she was told to desist. Then she stood once more before the housekeeper, who went on:

"I am of opinion that you will please his grace. Your duties will not be arduous, though you may be kept at work longer than you expect. You will have to read books and papers to his grace, whose eyesight fails him a little, you will write his letters, and you will sing, and play and talk to him. When not required by the duke you will render yourself agreeable to me, especially after dinner, when I experience a pleasure in being sung and played to sleep. While wrapt in slumber you will sit by my side and fan the flies away from my face. In fact you will be my attendant when not with the duke, and these apartments will be yours. You may take walking exercise occasionally in the park, and, as your position is not that of a servant, I shall not allow you to hold any communication with the upper servants. Be most circumspect in your conduct, for the breath of idle scandal must in no way assail one placed as you are. Now I will conduct you to your bedroom, where you can make your toilet. Dinner will be ready in half an hour. You take your meals with me, and afterwards I will conduct you to his grace, and see that you are attired in becoming garments, which reminds me that I must look over your boxes, and remove any expensive or gaudy dresses. Simplicity in one situated as you are is to be cultivated before all things."

Milly made a suitable reply, and was shown her bedroom, after which she gave Mrs. Cotteram her keys, and her boxes were overhauled. The housekeeper seeming disappointed that there was nothing to confiscate except a handsome poplin, which she declared was not suitable, she took it away on her arm.

Left alone, Milly could not help sighing.

"I shall not have much freedom here," she murmured. "Mrs. Cotteram is worse than a duenna. I wonder what the duke is like, and how he will receive me; perhaps in his society I shall find more pleasure than in his housekeeper's—she would make a slave of me. Sometimes good-looking girls—and I think I am passably pretty—are able to establish a firm influence over old men. The duke lives a very retired life—sees little or no company—who knows but that he may take a fancy to me and offer to—"

She was about to say "marry me," but the audacity of the idea frightened her, and she broke off abruptly, adding, after a momentary pause, during which she was engaged in brushing her long and beautiful hair—"How I do run on, to be sure. Even if he did do me such an impossible honour I don't think I should care about being an old man's darling. Perhaps it is better thought to be an old man's darling than a young one's slave. Fancy being the wife of a poor young man and having half a dozen children to bring up, clothe, educate, and feed on next to nothing a year."

She looked out of the window, which opened upon the well-shrubbed garden, and beyond that again over the deer-stocked park, with its wealth of patriarchal timber.

"To be the mistress of this magnificent domain would indeed be the realisation of a proud dream," she continued.

"What is that you are saying, Miss Haines?" exclaimed a voice at her elbow.

"I was only admiring the beauty of this exquisite scenery," answered Milly, thinking to herself—"I must be cautious; Mrs. Cotteram is a spy, she walks about in list slippers. I must be on my guard."

"Ah, you will indeed call it beautiful when you have seen all its charms," said Mrs. Cotteram. "But come, I have rung the bell for dinner. Punctuality is one of my mottoes, and I shall have to scold you severely if you are so long dressing."

Milly apologized and hastily finished dressing. When she entered the room the dinner was on the table. There were soup, and fish, and *entrees*, followed by a joint and game. From the way in which she

tasted nearly everything it was evident that the housekeeper was fond of good living. Two footmen stood behind her chair, and one behind Milly's. The plate was massive and elegant, while an *épergne* which stood in the centre of the table, filled with choice exotics, must have cost five hundred guineas. The wines were excellent, and the dessert comprised every delicacy of the season.

It was clear that Mrs. Cotteram had not in the least exaggerated when she spoke of the power her position gave her in the duke's household.

CHAPTER XIII.

Slowly, slowly, slowly, the days succeeded each other;

Days and weeks and months—and the fields of maize that were springing
Green from the ground, when a stranger she came,
Now waving above her. *Longfellow.*

THE Duke of Lewes dined at seven, and Milly was to be introduced to his favourable notice afterwards. She wore a plain black merino dress, with white collar and a little piece of lace on each sleeve instead of cuffs; a brooch of ebony fastened her collar, and her hair was tied up with a bit of blue ribbon, culminating in a bow. Mrs. Cotteram objected to the blue ribbon, but as no other colour could be found at the moment she was allowed to wear it. It was scarcely possible for her attire to be plainer.

When she entered the drawing-room at about half past eight, and Mrs. Cotteram, after saying "This is Miss Haines, your grace," retired and shut the door, the duke was sitting before a fire which the growing chilliness of autumn rendered desirable in the evening. Before him was a small console table, on which stood a cup of coffee.

He was about fifty-six or fifty-eight years of age, with a pleasant face, rather childish in its expression, though bland and benevolent. Although he dined alone and seldom entertained any one except his doctor and the parson of the parish, he was carefully attired in evening dress.

"Pray be seated," he exclaimed, "and excuse me for not rising to receive you—a touch of my old enemy, the gout, makes moving uncomfortable."

Milly sat down at the table and waited for him to speak, which he was some time in doing, and when he did it was in an irritable tone which contrasted strangely with the studied politeness of his first address.

"Why don't you say something, ma'am?" he cried, with the pettishness of a child, "or at least do something. I suppose they have told you that I suffer from attacks of melancholy, and that you have been sent here to cheer me a little. Talk—for goodness' sake say something. I have enough statues about the place already."

"I was not aware, my lord," she replied, "that you wished me to be amusing. I have only been told to be very circumspect, but if you will allow me to treat you as I would any relation of my own, with a natural freedom and throw aside all reserve, I shall be more at my ease, and perhaps we shall get on better together."

"Quite right, that's what I like," exclaimed the old peer, delightedly. "Be at home. Don't mind what I say. I'm only a grumpy old fellow, but I like to have fresh and pretty and innocent hearts and faces beside me. Do as you like, my dear, and if I scold you scold me back again."

"That I certainly shall," answered Milly. "If I meet with any unkind treatment in this house or rude behaviour such as a lady is not expected to put up with, however subordinate her position may be, I shall put on my bonnet and walk straight away."

The duke regarded her with a curious stare.

"I—I don't want to be bullied," he stammered. "It won't do to try to annoy me. I'm very peculiar, and Mrs. Cotteram knows how to manage things for me. She's a clever woman. It—it's monstrous odd, but do you know you've said more to me in five minutes than any one else has dared to say in a year, yet I don't dislike you for it. I thought I'd ring the bell and tell them to take you away and send you back to Biddles, with a letter saying you would not suit, but I've thought better of it. Come a little nearer and stir the fire for me, my dear. I think I shall like you. Stir it well. I like a blaze, it cheers one up."

Milly took up the poker and stirred the fire, then she sat down quite close to the childish and spoilt old man, who had never been contradicted since he left school, and never in his life had known what it was to want a sovereign.

"Shall I play you something, or sing or—?" she began.

"What would you like to do?" he replied. "There, you see I am not acting like a tyrant, am I?"

"Not at all, and I am deeply grateful to you," answered Milly. "If you ask me candidly what I should prefer it would be a quiet, cosy chat by this fire with you. I have been travelling to-day and

feel tired; my fingers are rigid, and I am not in good voice. Besides all which list of grievances Mrs. Cotteram trotted me out for her own amusement for about an hour, and made herself so very tedious that to get in decent and agreeable society once more is quite a blessing."

The duke's eyes danced with delight.

"I know we shall suit one another," he cried. "You're not the stuck-up, formal, frumpish sort of girl I expected to see. You are free and unconstrained in your manner, which is what I have sought after for years. You consider yourself my equal."

"Since you give me permission to do so," replied Milly.

"And you don't 'my lord' me and 'your grace' me, which gets so sickening by repetition. I'm like a man who has found a precious jewel in a field, and I mean to keep you all to myself. You've established your position at once, my dear, and now make yourself quite at home. Chat away, and tell me something about yourself. Have you long been a companion? How did you come to know that rascal Biddles? I shall owe him a debt all my life for sending you here. Are your family poor? You seem as if you have had command of money and mixed in good society."

"So I have," said Milly.

"Sudden break-down, eh? Commercial failure. Father something in the City. Paulo, and all that sort of thing. Monstrous odd! how people will speculate!"

For a moment Milly reflected.

Should she tell him her history, and let him into the secret of Lord Cardington's baseness and iniquity, or should she make some evasive reply?

Wisely she decided upon telling the truth.

"My history is a peculiar one," she said, "and it will astonish you more than you expect. It is barely a year since I left home, and I have seen a great deal in that time."

"Of the nursery-governess sort of life?" asked the duke. "I know the milk-and-water sort of thing. Lostons in the morning, then a walk with the children, after that dinner; then lessons again, and a mild flirtation in the evening with the eldest son, if you are fortunate enough to be invited to the drawing-room. I don't think I shall find that very interesting."

"Allow me to contradict you. This is my first situation."

"Indeed! It is becoming romantic. Go on, I beg of you. Monstrous odd that a chat of a girl like you should have a romantic history."

"My father and mother were tradespeople—grocers, in fact, in Chertsey, and, being religious people, they brought me up very strictly. I cannot say I was happy, but at all events I was not miserable."

"That is something in this world," put in his grace.

"My mother's sister was married to a fashionable doctor who lived in May Fair. He wanted to borrow some money of my father, and invited me to stay with his wife and daughter. I went to town."

"And fell in love, eh? Monstrous odd! girls must fall in love."

"I did, and with a villain, who asked me to marry him before the registrar. I consented. He wanted me to go abroad, but I wished to go to the opera. We went, and while in a private box a lady whom he had treated infamously came in and told me that I had been deceived, because the registrar who performed the ceremony was a mock registrar, and the marriage a sham one. He had bribed an attorney having chambers in Doctors' Commons to act the part of a registrar. She added that she had been deceived by him in a similar manner, and deserted a few weeks afterwards in Brussels."

"I have heard something like this before," muttered the duke, passing his hand over his brow.

"I ran away," continued Milly, "and found refuge in the house of a policeman. Not knowing what to do, I took a walk the next morning in the park to ponder over my position. While crossing the road I was run over. The lady in the carriage took me to her house. I was ill for some weeks, and while delirious I revealed what had happened to me. This lady recognized the name of him whose treachery was revealed to me, and, oddly enough, her daughter was the lady who had so opportunely warned me."

"Monstrous odd!" said his grace, using his favourite phrase.

"When I got well I went to see my parents, and found the shop shut up. My father had hanged himself on hearing of my reported disgrace, which news had come from my kind relations in May Fair. My mother had gone mad, and was in the County Lunatic Asylum."

"Poor girl! poor child!" said the duke, whose sensitive nature, always aroused by tales of distress, was moved to tears by this piteous recital.

"I was half mad that day, but worse was to come."

I returned to my kind friend and benefactress, whom I found lying dead on the floor. Murdered!"

"By whom?"

"You shall hear," replied Milly. "There was an inquest, and an open verdict was returned. I ascertained that the unfortunate lady had left me all her money, amounting to several thousands a year, on the understanding that I would seek out her daughter and try and render her happy. To this task I devoted all my energies."

"Did you find her?"

"I did. Assuming the disguise of a man's dress, and calling myself a foreign count, I introduced myself to the man who had deserted her and blighted my career. He forged my name to a bill of exchange, and I bought it up. He heard of this, and invited me to sail with him in his yacht, intending to throw me overboard."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed the duke, between his clenched teeth.

"We were wrecked near Weymouth, and only this man and myself were saved. We took refuge in a fisherman's cottage, nearly opposite Portland Island."

"Where there is a convict settlement?"

"Exactly. In this cottage, secluded from the world, the girl I was in search of was lodging. She had retired to this lonely place to indulge her grief in secret, for she still loved him. My disguise was penetrated, and a mutual recognition took place. I showed the gentleman his forged acceptance, and told him if he did not marry Ariadne—that was her name—I would denounce him to the police; because, knowing that she loved him still, I thought it would be the best way of fulfilling my kind benefactress's commands."

"Capital. What a situation that would make in a play."

"More striking incidents were to come," continued Milly. "The gun on Portland Island announcing the escape of a convict began to sound. Ariadne had consented to marry the gentleman—"

"Why do you call him 'the gentleman'? He had a name, I suppose?"

"I have a reason, which you will appreciate presently. The marriage was arranged, and, to save himself, the man, for he was not a gentleman, consented to make her his wife. At that moment an escaped convict took refuge in the cottage. We were about to drive him forth when he recognized his lordship."

"Oh! He was a lord, it seems."

"He was a disgrace to the peerage, and, I fear, will always be so."

"This is very interesting. Go on," cried the duke, drinking in every word she uttered.

"The convict," pursued Milly, "pointed out his lordship as the man who had hired him to kill Ariadne's mother."

"The villain! What was his reason?"

"He knew that Mrs. Mallison—"

"Mallison! Why, that is my Philip's name," cried the duke, who was growing bewildered.

"I know it," answered Milly. "Mr. Philip Mallison, your lordship's protégé, is Ariadne's brother. But I was about to say that his lordship wished Mrs. Mallison out of the way because she was an active enemy of his and did him harm in society."

"I have it, I have it," said the duke; "the mystery is explained. Mrs. Mallison came to me. It was through her visit that I took her son Philip into my service. She came to complain of my nephew. It is Cardington whom you are speaking of."

"Claude, Lord Cardington," said Milly, quietly.

"The villain," said the old man, bitterly; "he has been a thorn in my side for many years. I can believe anything base and bad of him. Monstrous odd that you should have been mixed up with him. Well, go on. The convict was hired by him to murder Mrs. Mallison."

"We concealed the convict in a vault, but the warders came after him and drew him out. He fought desperately, and after killing one of his pursuers escaped through the window of the cottage."

"And Ariadne?"

"Asked me for the forged note which placed Lord Cardington in my power. I gave it her. Handing it to Lord Cardington, with sublime generosity she said—"

"Go, my lord; I give you your liberty, but I cannot marry the murderer of my mother."

"This is pathetic. I—excuse me," said the old peer, wiping his eyes with his pocket handkerchief. "I'm not myself at all."

"His lordship," Milly went on, "left the cottage, glad to be rid of such an encumbrance as a wife would have been to a man of his tastes, disposition, and pursuits. Especially such a wife as Ariadne, whom he hated simply because he had wronged her. Ariadne gave me her room. I slept for some hours, then dressed myself in her clothes, which she was kind enough to place at my disposal. In the afternoon I walked along the beach."

"And you saw?—I can guess. Oh, it is too terrible!"

"The dead body of my poor Ariadne. She had drowned herself in the frenzy brought on by her despair. While I was looking at the poor, pale face, once so eloquent, now so sad and silent, his lordship came up. He was bold and callous. I fear I insulted him, for he left me with threats, and I have not seen him since."

"But the money left you by Mrs. Mallison?"

"Ariadne being dead, I thought I had no right to it morally, and when Mr. Biddles told me she had a son alive I freely gave him permission to hand it over to him."

"Then this is the origin and nature of the fortune that I heard Philip Mallison had had left him?" exclaimed the duke.

"It is," answered Milly.

"And you really gave it all up and went out in the world to work for your daily bread?"

"Really," replied Milly, with a smile.

"Noble girl," cried the duke, shaking her by the hand, enthusiastically. "You have the true stuff that heroines are made of. You have gained my admiration, my respect, and my esteem. Heaven bless you, child—Heaven bless you!"

An hour or more passed in a sort of confidential conversation between his grace and Milly, who was asked a variety of questions, all of which she answered truthfully and with circumstantial minuteness.

The duke assured her that she had found a haven of rest at last, and that he did not think Lord Cardington would trouble her while she remained at the castle, as he had strictly forbidden him the house, and refused to have anything more to do with him.

"The story of his villainy which I have heard detailed for the first time this evening," concluded his grace, "has embittered me more than ever against him. My doors are now closed against him for ever. As for you, my dear," he added, "do as you like in this house."

"But Mrs. Cotteram—"

"Never mind her. I will have no interference with you. If Mrs. Cotteram and you should clash let me know and I will dismiss her. It is true that she is an old and faithful servant, but you are my darling now, and you shall have your own way in everything."

It was eleven o'clock when he wished her good-night, and she retired to rest with the happy consciousness that her position at the castle was secured.

Yet she had the sense not to boast of her influence over the duke, and was submissive to Mrs. Cotteram, so that no hitch occurred in the domestic arrangements of his grace.

Mrs. Cotteram was useful in her way, and she knew that the duke would not really like to part with her, so she cultivated her friendship and gained it.

Months passed, and Milly's life glided away happily. The duke seemed to love her as a daughter, and so amiable and good natured was she—so full of smiles for everybody—that she became a general favourite.

Yet was there a snake in her little Eden. This was a man named Turner, the steward, who, having known Lord Cardington from a boy, was devoted to his interests.

It was commonly said in the servants' hall that his grace would end by marrying Miss Haines.

"See if he don't," said the coachman.

"Well," remarked the cook, "I've seen stranger things than that come about," and she looked lovingly at one of the tall footmen.

"I'll lay a wager that his grace thinks of nothing of the sort," exclaimed the steward, who happened to be in the hall; "and if I hear any more of such idle chatter I'll go and report it to his lordship."

This silenced the gossip.

Turner however did not feel at all easy in his mind about the matter.

He saw that Lord Cardington's chances of inheriting his uncle's vast property were every day growing slenderer and yet more slender. Of course he had only his infamous mode of living to thank for that and the general bad character that he contrived to gain wherever he went.

Still if Milly was a designing woman, about which Turner, not knowing her, was not qualified to form an opinion, she might induce an old gentleman like the duke to marry her, then Lord Cardington's chance would be irretrievably destroyed.

So he thought it his duty, as he had been for years in his lordship's pay, to make him acquainted with the state of affairs, and let him act as he thought proper.

He wrote to Lord Cardington as follows:

"MY LORD.—His grace does not show much alteration, nor does he mention your name. I think you ought to come and see your uncle, more especially as Mr. Philip Mallison is expected back shortly, and

there has arrived here a young lady, as companion to his grace, in whom he is much wrapt up. I never saw any young lady make such an impression upon him before and in so short a time. The servants say amongst themselves that she may become Duchess of Leveson, in which case your chance of coming into the fortune would be small. If you could meet me at the lodge gates as before, any time you like to fix, my lord, I shall be there to receive you, and am your lordship's obliged and humble servant,

"CHRIS. TURNER."

This letter was despatched to London, and its contents were not calculated to give him any additional serenity of mind.

Meanwhile Philip Mallison, who, as Chris. Turner had said, was expected, had arrived at the castle, where he was received by the duke with open arms.

We have stated that Philip had travelled to the East Indian Archipelago to collect rare and curious shells for his noble patron, who took great pride and pleasure in the number of cabinets he had filled with specimens as a conchologist, as a shell collector is called in scientific language. His grace was unrivalled in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, and he would pass hours in contemplating the shells and cataloguing them.

After the greeting was over the duke hastened to inspect the boxes that Philip had brought home with him, and his delight was unbounded when he saw the numerous treasures of which he was made the happy owner.

When this amusement grew tedious the duke talked to Philip about other matters, and amongst them of his newly acquired fortune.

"Mr. Biddles has written me a full account of the relinquishment of the money by the generous young lady to whom my poor mother, for some reason of her own, thought fit to leave it," said Philip Mallison; "and I long to have an opportunity of thanking her personally for the sacrifice she has made."

"But you don't know where to find her, eh?" said the duke, with a sly smile.

"Perhaps Biddles will give me her address."

"Suppose she is in this house, and I, becoming a magician, make this bell rope my potent wand, and summon her to your presence?"

"If you can do that I shall not only be surprised, my lord, but pleased also."

The duke rang the bell.

"Explain this mystery to me, if you please. I am on thorns of expectation and curiosity," exclaimed Philip.

The duke told him that Milly, having given him her fortune, was in want of some occupation, and that Mr. Biddles had sent her to the castle to be his grace's companion, secretary, etc.

"A very excellent, amiable, and useful one I have found her," concluded the duke. "Quite a treasure, my dear boy. Don't know now what I should do without her. Monstrous odd to say so, but I should be lost. She plays and sings like an angel."

"You make me quite eager to see this paragon. Ah, here she is! How prettily she trips along, how quiet and reserved her manner; how neat her dress, and what a look of resignation and happy contentment is stamped upon her face!" muttered Philip Mallison.

Milly was introduced to Philip, who was a tall, good-looking, dark young man, with a sunburnt face and a steady, serious expression of countenance, pleasing in his manner and polite in his address.

"It is an unexpected pleasure for me to meet you in this house," he exclaimed. "Permit me to thank you for making me richer than I ever expected to be."

"I only gave you your own, Mr. Mallison," answered Milly.

"Nevertheless it was legally yours."

"But not morally."

"At all events I could not have claimed it, and I am eternally your debtor as well as your friend, if you will allow me the honour of calling you so," he exclaimed.

Milly replied in appropriate terms, and the young man paid her the utmost attention.

Never had he seen any girl he was so much inclined to love at first sight.

The aged peer watched them converse with a sort of jealous expression.

This Milly, with her keen perception, did not fail to notice.

She saw that the duke was pained, and, leaving Philip, went to the side of the old nobleman, trying to show him that his society was infinitely preferable to her; but he remained childishly sulky and silent all the remainder of the day.

To be continued.

BRUIN AT LARGE.—A bear has escaped from its cage at a house near Cricklewold, on the road to Hendon. It has hid itself in a wood belonging to

Lord Macclesfield at Hampstead. It almost frightened to death 200 navvies, who, although armed with pickaxes and massive hammers, fled in dismay at its sight. Their only excuse for their lack of ancient British courage is that they did not want any bear's-grease at that particular moment.

THE MYSTIC EYE OF HEATHCOTE.

CHAPTER XLII.

JANET made her way in great trepidation that Christmas morning; it seemed that she would never reach the "Heathcote Arms." She had seen and recognized Colonel Hershaw at the magistrate's office as the man from whose face her uncle tore the monk's cowl and painted beard in the gloom of that old Alpine dungeon. The girl had sharp eyes and a good memory, and she could have taken her oath that the fierce, ireful face of the Indian officer was the self-same one that lay pallid and blood-stained on the reeking flagstones on the night of Lady Grace's rescue.

"And he recognized Uncle Hendrick, that's why he caused his arrest; and he may get his clutches on me too," she thought, glancing over her shoulder as she fled on in the dim Christmas dawn with the mystic old opal in her possession.

Daring and almost desperate as she was, Janet felt a childish terror as she remembered the awful look the colonel's eyes wore when they rested on her uncle. He was the man who had planned the destruction of Lady Grace, and was no doubt, she thought, with a deeper shudder, the perpetrator of that awful murder for which that poor young man was imprisoned.

"Poor Uncle Hendrick's in his power now, and he the master of Heathcote Abbey, so rich and so great!" she sobbed. "Ah! me, who shall help me now?"

All her courage, and her hope too, had utterly failed her, and she ran on, frightened by imaginary pursuers, till she reached the "Heathcote Arms." The smoke was curling up from the great chimneys, and Mrs. Telfer stood in the doorway red with virtuous indignation.

"A pretty baggage, indeed, as I took for a quiet lass, a racing off at a time like this, when Telfer daren't budge outside of the chimney corner," she began, her arms set fiercely akimbo; but the girl's white face brought her to a sudden halt.

"Why, lass," she said, "you are as white as the dead in their graves. What is it?"

Janet burst into a fit of hysterical sobbing. "Oh, Mrs. Telfer," she moaned, "you don't know how much trouble I'm in—they've arrested my uncle. Pray don't you turn against me."

"Arrested your uncle?" panted the landlady, growing white with apprehension. "Why, child, what do you mean?"

"Oh, I forgot," cried poor Janet, in great consternation; "but I suppose it will have to be known now—and I must trust in some one, or my heart will break."

The tears rose to the kind-hearted woman's eyes. "Poor lamb!" she said, tenderly, opening her fat arms, "you may trust in me, and have no fear. I'm not the woman to turn against a creature in distress. Come now, tell me what all this means."

Janet, shivering and sobbing like a child, gratefully accepted the motherly embrace, then, following Mrs. Telfer to the bar-parlour, where a brisk fire was burning, she told her story, or as much of it as she deemed prudent to reveal.

The landlady sat for some time dumb with surprise, then she brought her fat hands sharply together.

"Well, well," she ejaculated, "it just beats all! Who'd ever have dreamed of such a thing? But I tell you what, lass, I'll stand by you, come what may, and so will Telfer. We daren't say much, to be sure, being as the great folks up at the Abbey have all the power in their own hands, but there will be many a way we can help you, and we'll do it, so dry your tears, lass, and keep a stout heart, and I'll run out and break the matter to Telfer, while you have a wash and get ready for a bite of breakfast."

Janet sought her little sleeping-room with something of the terrible weight lifted from her brave young heart; and, sitting down on her couch, she took out and unclasped the little green case. There it lay in its wondrous splendour—the old Heathcote opal. She knew it in an instant, for she had heard Aunt Margaret describe it a hundred times.

How strange it seemed that this famed and priceless jewel should be given to her keeping! She turned it over and over in girlish admiration, and, resolving to lose her life rather than part with

it, she fashioned a little receptacle in the inner lining of her dress, and concealed it there close against her breast, where she could feel it with every throb of her heart.

Christmas Day was unusually merry at the Telfer inn; there were crowds of visitors, and the horrid details of the murder were recited so many times that poor Janet grew sick from hearing them.

Treherne Vant was quite dead, but St. Denys Delmar was still alive, though utterly unconscious. The universal verdict went against young Brignoli. Of course he did the deed, yet what could have been his motive? What was there for him to gain from the death of these two men? Not plunder, for nothing had been disturbed except the lawyer's papers, which had been overhauled and scattered in every direction.

The galeities at Heathcote Abbey had been most rudely terminated, and the invited guests were returning to London by every train, for her ladyship was utterly prostrated by the awful shock, and could see only a few of her dearest friends. The son she had mourned as dead to reappear a murderer under her very eyes—no wonder she sank beneath it. But she firmly rejected the accusation, persisting in her boy's innocence, and so did her husband, Colonel Hershaw.

No man could have acted a nobler part than did the colonel. Ignoring the young man's insolence and ingratitude, he went down on Christmas Day and offered to give bail for any amount, but the authorities refused to accept it.

Falling in this, the colonel rode over to the Anchorage, thinking, perchance, that Delmar had recovered sufficiently to be able to throw some light on the terrible affair. But he found the poor gentleman alive, and that was all that could be said—every breath that stirred his white lips was expected to be the last.

So, finding no other outlet for his generous and fatherly feelings, the good colonel galloped back to the Abbey and wrote some half-dozen letters engaging the very best London lawyers for the forthcoming trial. People began to think they had not quite appreciated the Indian officer.

Meanwhile Janet watched the dreary day go by with an anxious heart, listening to the exaggerated gossip with thrills of terror. She heard her uncle accused and anathematized by every tongue, charged with complicity in the murder, and of every other imaginable offence.

Colonel Hershaw knew him, and accused him as a villain of the deepest dye. He would surely hang for it.

Never a wink did Janet sleep that night, and bright and early on the following morning she went down to the prison and made her request to be allowed to see her uncle. But the warden had received the most positive orders not to admit a single soul, and all her entreaties met with a stern refusal.

Bitterly disappointed, the girl retraced her steps, and, seeing nothing else to be done, she made her few simple preparations, and took the afternoon train for Cornwall.

But the dreadful tidings had got the start of her. Immediately after the early breakfast at the old farmhouse Lady Grace and Aunt Margaret sat in the comfortable sitting-room with a look of expectation on their happy faces.

Grace was very prettily attired, and a lovely glow mantled her transparent cheeks, while her shining, love-lit eyes continually sought the window.

Margaret smiled as she observed her.

"He'll be down to-day, I'm sure," she said, presently, speaking of Carlos, "so you've no need to feel anxious, dear. He said I should not look for him too soon, but I'm sure he'll be down to-day—and such a surprise as the dear fellow will have! How shall we manage it, my dear? It will never do to let him see you all of a sudden."

Grace blushed in the most charming manner, and said something that was wholly inarticulate, and Nurse Seaton was taxing her inventive powers to get the *dénouement* arranged according to her satisfaction when a sharp rap at the door brought them both to their feet.

But the arrival was nothing more than the grocer's cart, which made a weekly call at the farm-houses along the coast.

The grocer's boy, a talkative, witty stripling, clambered down from his seat and made his way to the kitchen, whither Margaret and Lady Grace soon followed him, the advent of this same grocer had being an item of more than ordinary interest in the sluggish routine of every-day life at the old farmhouse.

"Well, Simon," said the mother of Janet as she received her supply, and paid what was due, "what news do you bring this morning? Any new papers in your pocket?"

The grocer's boy nodded his bow head, and thrust his hands into his capacious pockets.

"Well, there is not much astir about here," he replied, "but they've had an awful set-out up in Yorkshire—two men murdered in their own house, and the murderer caught on the spot. Here's an account of the whole affair."

He drew a paper from his pocket and smoothed it open on his knee. Lady Grace took it, and ran her eyes down the opening columns, and with her first glance her cheeks blanched to the hue of death. There it was, in great black capitals:

"The tragedy near Heathcote Abbey!"

She read on, impelled by a kind of fascination, till she came to the name of the supposed murderer, then the paper fluttered from her shaking hands.

"Oh, Aunt Margaret!" she gasped, and dropped from her seat as if she had been shot.

(To be continued.)

A DARING GAME; OR, NEVA'S THREE LOVERS.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE simple and business-like announcement of her name by Mrs. Blight's young governess to Mrs. Blight's eccentric guest produced a sensation as startling as unexpected to Lally. Mrs. Wroat uttered a strange exclamation, and leaned forward on her staff, her black eyes staring at the young girl in a piercing gaze, her hooked nose and her chin almost meeting, and her shrivelled lips mumbling, excitedly, an inaudible whisper. The old lady's eagerness and agitation were shared by her maid, who stared at Lally with a wondering and incredulous gaze.

"Who—who did you say you were?" demanded Mrs. Wroat, as soon as she could speak, in cracked, hoarse tones—"who?"

"I am Mrs. Blight's governess, ma'am," replied Lally, wondering, and concluding in her own mind that Mrs. Wroat's eccentricities verged upon madness.

"Yes, yes, I know," cried the old lady, impatiently, "but who are you?"

"Nobody, ma'am—only Lally Bird, the governess."

"Ah-h!" said the old lady, in an odd, choked voice. "Lal-Lally Bird! Bless my soul, Peters!"

Mrs. Wroat looked at the young governess with such a queer snap in her eyes, and such a glow on her sallow, withered face, that Lally involuntarily retreated a step towards the door.

"It's the young lady, ma'am," whispered Peters, full of amazement. "Whatever does it mean? It's like magic or sorcery."

"It means that our advertisement is already answered," returned Mrs. Wroat, grimly. "Saved the post-office orders, Peters. I believe in advertising, Peters. We've just seen the benefit of it."

Lally retreated another step towards the door.

"If you please, ma'am," she said, in a little fluttering voice, "I will come and play for you later—"

"No, you won't!" interrupted Mrs. Wroat. "Now you are here you'll stay here till I have done with you. Do you know who I am?"

Lally brought to her support a pretty, girlish dignity which sat well upon her round, gipsy face.

"Yes, madam," she answered; "you are Mrs. Wroat, the aunt of Mr. Blight."

"Wrong. I am only his uncle's widow. Come under the chandelier."

Lally came forward hesitatingly, and stood under the great chandelier where a dozen wax candles burned mellowly from a forest of tall unlighted ones.

The soft glow fell upon Lally's face and figure. She was thin, and there was a tremulous anxiety on her features; but in her mourning dress, with a red flush on her dark cheeks, and a bright light in her velvety black eyes, she was very pretty, with a dark, gipsy beauty that seemed to startle Mrs. Wroat.

"The very image of poor Clara," muttered the old lady, "and the very counterpart of what I was at her age. There, Peters, if you want to see what I was like in my youth, look at that girl."

Whatever Mrs. Wroat's appearance might have been in her far-past youth, she looked now like a malignant old fairy, in her dress of black velvet, and with her cloak of scarlet velvet drawn around her shoulders. Her diamonds were not brighter than her eyes, whose keen and piercing glances tried to read Lally's soul.

"Peters," said the old lady, abruptly, "give the girl that copy of the advertisement."

The maid silently handed the slip of paper to Lally, who read it in deepening amazement.

"Is this an advertisement for me, madam?" she demanded. "I am Lally Bird. Are—are you 'M. W.'?"

"Of 'Mount Street, London'?" finished the old lady. "Yes, I am 'M. W.'—Maria Wroat."

"You were about to advertise for me, madam? I—I don't understand. Or is there some other Lally Bird?"

"No danger of that," said Mrs. Wroat. "There were never two women in this world so silly and moonstruck as your mother—never two women who named their girls Lalla Rookh. Pah! What a name! But, for fear your mother was not the only goose in the world who married a Bird, just answer me a few questions. What was your father's name? and what was his business?"

"He was a corn-chandler in the City, and his name was John Bird," answered Lally, quite bewildered. "And what was your mother's name before her marriage?"

"Clara Mulford Percy—" Mrs. Wroat gave a queer little gasp, and her hands trembled, and she looked at her faithful attendant in a sort of triumph.

"Do you hear that, Peters?" she whispered. "Do you hear it, I say?" Then she added, aloud—"Go on, girl. Who was your mother?"

"She was the daughter of a country gentleman who owned an estate in Hampshire. There were several children besides my mother, but they all died young and unmarried. The estate was entailed, and went to a distant relative. My mother married my father against the wishes of her friends, and was disowned by them in consequence."

"Very properly too, I should say. If a girl chooses to descend from her proper rank in society as a gentleman's petted daughter, and take to living in a back room behind a corn-chandler's shop, she can't expect her friends to follow her," said Mrs. Wroat, with some energy. "You were her only child?"

"Yes, madam."

"Any relatives living?"

"No, madam. My mother died young. My father lived to give me a good education, then died insolvent, leaving me dependent upon my own exertions when I was less than sixteen years old. My father was a tradesman, humbly born, madam, but he was a gentleman at heart."

"So poor Clara said. Humph! So you've no relatives living, eh?"

"None whom I know, madam. The present holder of my grandfather's estate in Hampshire is my distant relative, but he knows as little of me as I do of him. And—and," added Lally, suddenly trembling, as if a suspicion of the truth were dawning upon her soul, "I have a great-aunt living in London—she was my mother's aunt—who married a banker, and is now a widow if she still lives. She must be very old."

"About my age!" said Mrs. Wroat, her eyes snapping. "Just about my age. What was her name?"

"Her name was Maria Percy when a girl. She was married many years before my mother was born, and she was my mother's god-mother. I don't know her married name. If I ever heard it I have forgotten it."

"Then I'll tell it to you," said the old lady. "Her present name is Maria Wroat. Her home is in Mount Street, London. And at this moment she sits before you, taking stock of you."

Lally grew pale, and her black eyes opened to their widest extent.

"You—you my aunt!" she ejaculated. "So it seems, my dear. I've been searching for you for some time. So you are Clara's child! You may kiss me if you want to, my dear."

Lally approached the old lady with some hesitation, and bestowed a kiss upon the proffered wrinkled cheek. Then she shrank back in a sort of affright, wondering at her own temerity.

"Sit down," said the old lady, kindly. "I have a few questions to ask you, and on your answers depends more than you know of. Peters, don't stare the poor child out of countenance. Girl, how old are you?"

"Seventeen years, ma'am."

"And I'm eighty—one of us at the beginning, the other at the end of life! Heigh-ho! So you're governess here?"

Lally replied in the affirmative.

"No wonder you look sorrowful and pale and woe-begone!" muttered Mrs. Wroat. "To be governess of the young Blights must be a horrible martyrdom. Don't you think so? And isn't it martyrdom to be under the orders of that odious, vulgar, garrulous Mrs. Blight? Eh?"

"When I came here," said Lally, agitatedly, "I had no home on earth. I was out of money, out of clothes, and utterly friendless. So, madam, I am very grateful to Mrs. Blight for shelter and a home, and cannot consider any service that gives me these a martyrdom."

"Grateful, eh? What have you to be grateful for?" asked the old lady, cynically. "You have shelter and food, but you earn them. I'll be bound. You work early and late for the pitiful sum of forty pounds a year. That is what you get, is it not?"

"No, ma'am. I am young and inexperienced, and I needed the place very much, so I got but twenty pounds a year."

"Bless my soul!" cried the old lady. "Because you needed the place so much you get only half price! That is just like Laura Blight. How came you to be so friendless?"

"After my father's death," said Lally, "I taught music in the school in which I had been educated. The school broke up, the proprietors being advanced in life and being able to retire from labour, and I was thrown adrift. I was obliged to do anything I could get to do. I lived for some weeks or months with an old woman who was seamstress to a boys' school, and when she died I was out of work again, and came down into Kent and worked in the hop-fields. I was so hungry—"

"Do you hear that, Peters?" interrupted the old lady, turning savagely upon her attendant, her bright black eyes beaded with tears. "Do you hear it and sit there unmoved? She was hungry, while my servants flung away the dainties from my table, and I grumbled because they could not contrive newer delicacies to tempt my appetite. Hungry? Homeless? Friendless? Heaven be merciful to me! Hungry! Ah-h!"

"That is all past now, madam," said Lally, softly.

"To begin again when Laura Blight chooses to send you packing! She's full of caprices, is Laura. You're not sure of a place here over night, unless her interest bids her keep you. How much money have you laid up?"

"Mrs. Blight advanced me five pounds, my first quarter's salary, and I have eighteen shillings remaining," answered Lally.

"Humph! Eighteen shillings between you and the union. Look me in the eye, Lally."

The young girl obeyed, looking into Mrs. Wroat's piercing eyes with a steady, honest, unflinching gaze, although the colour fluttered in and out of her cheeks, as a bird flutters in and out of its cage.

"Have you ever done anything in your life of which you are ashamed?" asked the old lady, in a low, sternly anxious voice.

"No, ma'am," answered the girl, truthfully. "I never have."

"What do you think of her, Peters?" demanded Mrs. Wroat, turning to her maid and confidant.

The woman was crying behind her handkerchief. She had hard features, but her heart was warm and soft. She answered, sobbingly:

"I think, ma'am, as you'd ought to take her and adopt her, and make her your heiress—that's what I think, poor, pretty dear!"

"Shows your sense, Peters," said Mrs. Wroat. "You're a woman of a thousand, Peters, and I'll double the annuity I'm going to give you. Girl, come and sit here on the stool at my feet."

Lally came forward and sat down as directed.

"I am alone in the world, except for my good old Peters," said Mrs. Wroat, with a quiver of her pointed, up-turned chin. "These people here think only of what they can make out of me—of the fortune they hope to inherit at my death. I am old, and very near my end. I should like to leave my money to one of my own kindred, and to one who would really mourn a little for me when I am gone. I'm a queer old woman, Lally, full of notions, and so acres that any one but Peters would have given me up long ago; but, strange as it may seem, the good soul actually loves me. She's been in my service five-and-thirty years, and she's more a friend to me than a servant. Now, Lally, do you think you could ever love me? It's odd, I own, but even a cross old woman like me sometimes yearns to be loved."

Her voice trembled, and tears brimmed over the bright black eyes, and her sharp features were convulsed in sudden emotion. She looked at Lally with a strange wistfulness and yearning, and Lally's desolate, frozen soul thawed within her, and with a great sob she sprang up and threw her arms around her aged kinswoman, and kissed her fervently and tenderly.

"I have no one to love," whispered the girl, sobbing. "I would love you if you would let me."

A paroxysm of coughing seized upon the old lady, and Lally shrank back affrighted into her seat. Peters patted her mistress gently on her back and gave her water to drink, and she soon recovered, sinking back upon her cushions, tired and panting.

"I am near the end, my dear," she said, when she could command her voice. "I may live weeks, or it may be months; but the time is short. I like you, Lally, and I am going to adopt you and make you my heiress. You shall change your name to mine, and be known as Lalla Wroat, and at my death you shall inherit my fifty thousand pounds. And all I ask of you, Lally, is to love me a little, and try to be a daughter to me. I never had a daughter of my own."

Lally raised the old woman's hand reverently to her lips.

"I am afraid all this happiness is not for me,

madam," she said, bravely. "I am not what you think me, and you may not deem me fit to inherit your wealth. I—I have been married."

"Peters, the girl's head is turned."

"No, madam, I speak the truth. I am pure in the sight of Heaven, but I am a disowned wife."

"A wife—at seventeen?"

"Yes, madam. After I lost my situation as music-teacher I was married to a young gentleman, just from Oxford, where he had been educated. He was only twenty years old, and we were married by licence. He worked to support us, having talent as an artist, and we struggled along together until his father discovered our marriage and separated us, declaring the marriage null and void, his son being under twenty-one years of age. We were married in good faith; we loved each other; and Rufus was good, although he made oath that he was of age in order to secure the marriage licence. His father threatened to prosecute him for perjury if he did not give me up; and he gave me up."

"And who is this precious youth?" asked Mrs. Wroat.

Lally replied by telling her story precisely as it had occurred, excusing the conduct of her young husband as well as she could, and displaying in every look and word how passionately she still loved him.

"So the young man is poor, but of good birth and connexions, and university bred," commented Mrs. Wroat. "Well, Lally, my opinion is that your husband is not free from you, but that he will have to have recourse to law to secure his freedom. We'll consult my London lawyer when we get up to town, and we'll see about the young man. I'm afraid he's a poor stick; but we'll see—we'll see. I haven't changed my mind about adopting you, and I shall immediately assume a guardianship over you. You will quit Mrs. Blight's service to-morrow. Peters, how soon can we go back to town?"

"At the end of the week, ma'am, if you like," responded Peters, brightening.

"So be it, then. Pack your trunk, Lally. You will finish your stay in this house as my adopted daughter and future heiress, and to-morrow you and Peters shall go out shopping—"

Mrs. Wroat paused as a knock was heard at the door.

"Open the door, Peters," commanded the old lady. "It's Laura Blight."

Before Peters could obey the door opened from without, and Mrs. Blight, her chains tinkling and her red silk gown rustling, came into the room as airily as the rotund proportions of her figure would permit.

Her glances fell upon Lally, who was still sitting at the feet of her great-aunt, and Mrs. Blight's face showed her surprise and displeasure.

"I didn't hear the piano, dear Aunt Wroat," she exclaimed, "and I feared my governess might not have obeyed my order and come in to you. Miss Bird, I fear you forget your place. You are not a guest in this house—you are merely a hired servant. If you try, like a treacherous viper, to creep into the good graces of my poor, unsuspecting relative, I shall dismiss you in the morning. You are to play upon the piano, then go to your room."

The old lady's yellow and bony hand was stretched out and laid caressingly on Lally's black hair.

"I was talking to the child, Laura," she said. "I have been hearing her history. Don't you remember that I've been trying for years to find my niece, Clara Bird, or her children? Well, this girl is Clara's child—"

A look of fear and anger disfigured Mrs. Blight's face.

The girl became, upon the instant, a terror to her.

"Aunt Wroat," said the lawyer's wife, hastily, "this girl is a mere impostor that I took in out of charity. She has deceived you. Miss Bird, go to your room at once. To-morrow morning you leave my house."

"Peters," said Mrs. Wroat, quietly, "give me my purse."

Peters brought a plerotic pocket-book from her mistress's travelling-bag, and the old lady took out a five-pound Bank of England note.

"Give that to Mrs. Blight, Peters," continued the old lady, calmly. "Mrs. Blight, that is the amount you advanced to my great-niece when she entered your service. I do not wish her to be indebted to you. And here are twenty pounds to reimburse you for any expense I may have put you to. I am sorry, Laura, to disappoint you," added Mrs. Wroat, putting her wallet in her pocket, "but you and your husband need the lesson. I am not so deaf but that I heard every whisper you and your husband exchanged in the drawing-room to-night. I am aware that you consider me 'an old cat,' and 'an old nuisance,' and that you 'would send me to an almshouse if it were not for my money.' I have now only to say to you that your heartlessness has met with its appropriate reward. This young lady is my

adopted daughter and future heiress, and when you order a cab for her in the morning you may let the boy come up for my luggage also. I shall go with my adopted daughter."

CHAPTER XXX.

NEVA WYNDE had arrived in London by the morning express train from Canterbury, in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Craven Black, and from the moment in which she had emerged with them from the railway station all clue to her movements was suddenly and mysteriously lost.

What had become of her? How had she so singularly disappeared?

These questions which filled the souls of Neva's lover and guardians with such unspeakable terror and anxiety, and which they so signally failed in their efforts to solve, we now purpose answering for the benefit of the reader.

On alighting from the crowded morning train Craven Black hurried his bride, her maid and Neva into a waiting cab, superintended the mounting of the luggage to the stout cab roof, and gave the order to be driven to Gravesend, adding more explicit directions in an undertone. He then entered the vehicle, and it rolled from the station.

"Where are we going, Mrs. Black?" asked Neva, looking from the cab windows. "I fancied Mr. Black said Gravesend."

"So he did, my dear," said Mrs. Craven Black, placidly. "Didn't I tell you that we are going to Yorkshire by water? September is such a lovely month, and this is such lovely weather, and it's quite the thing to take a sea trip for a bridal tour, and I prevailed upon Craven to charter—is not that the word?—a beautiful little yacht, which we are to have three months if we want it. We shall have a glorious voyage down the Thames and up the Channel, and through the great German Ocean. The very idea stirs all my love of romance. Doesn't it affect you in the same manner?"

"But Wynde Heights is not near the sea," objected Neva, in surprise.

"It's not two hours distant by rail, and it will be delightful to get up yachting parties by ourselves, and go off for a two days' excursion; don't you think so? Don't throw cold water upon my little plans for happiness, I beg of you, my dear Neva," cried Mrs. Craven Black, imploringly. "There is no reason why we shouldn't be perfectly happy, if you won't interpose objections, Neva."

Thus adjured, Neva took care to "interpose" no more objections. She had no liking for or trust in Craven Black, but Mrs. Craven Black had been her father's beloved and honoured wife, and Neva still believed in her. That the pair could mean her harm never once occurred to her. Neither did she realize how completely she was in their power. She had left her maid at home, at Mrs. Black's solicitation, the latter declaring that one maid would suffice for both, and that she especially disliked Meggy West, the girl who attended upon Neva. Thus the young heiress of Hawkhurst was absolutely friendless and helpless in the hands of her enemies.

They had a long drive to Gravesend. On arriving at their destination they alighted at a pier at which a small boat with two oarsmen was lying. These men were dressed in blue sailor costumes, each having an arrow embroidered on the breast of his jacket. Mr. Black went up to them, accosting them familiarly.

"What boat do you belong to?" he demanded. "To the 'Arrow,' sir, lying out yonder," said one of the men, pointing to a graceful yacht lying in the stream, her sails unfurled, and looking ready for flight. "We are waiting for Mr. Craven Black."

"I am he. It's all right, my men. Octavia, my love, let me assist you into the boat. Miss Wynde, this way."

The maid was left to scramble in by herself. The luggage was deposited in the boat; Mr. Black took his seat, and the rowers pulled off for the yacht.

The process of transferring passengers and luggage to the deck of the "Arrow" was speedily and safely accomplished. Mrs. Black was ecstatic in her commendations of the arrangements of the little vessel, and occupied the attention of Neva while Mr. Black conversed with the sailors and their captain, and the vessel was got under way.

The "Arrow" was by no means a new vessel, but she had been recently painted and fitted with new sails, and presented a very trim appearance. She was of about twenty tons burden. She had belonged to a member of the Royal Yacht Club, but had been advertised to be sold for a comparatively small sum, her owner having had built for him a vessel of greater size and speed. Craven Black had seen, a week before, the advertisement offering the "Arrow" for sale, and warranting her ready to put to sea at an hour's notice; and a part of the business of Mrs. Artress in town had been to purchase the vessel.

Among his friends of high and low degree Craven

Black possessed one who was thoroughly disreputable, but who had proved useful to him at too many periods of his life to be thrown aside. This person had formerly been a lawyer, but had been stricken from the rolls for illegal or dishonourable practice, and was a needy hanger-on and parasite of Craven Black. This person had been called upon to assist Mrs. Artress in the examination of the yacht, and had purchased the boat in his own name, paying therefor a sum of money provided by Mrs. Craven Black out of the jointure acquired by her marriage with Sir Harold Wynde. This ex-lawyer had also engaged three experienced sailors, one of whom had been a mate on an India vessel, and whom he hired as captain of the "Arrow," and these three men were now in charge of the little yacht.

These sailors, we may as well mention here, had been chosen for other qualifications than good seamanship. The ex-lawyer, in the days when he had been qualified to practise his profession, had been called upon to defend the three against a charge of mutiny, preferred against them by their captain. The charge had been proved, they had been convicted, and were fresh from two years' imprisonment. The ex-lawyer had come upon them at a drinking-shop, after their release, only a few days before, and, knowing their reckless character, had engaged them for a cruise in the "Arrow."

Such was the character of the seamen in charge of the yacht; and in such manner had the yacht itself been acquired by Craven Black.

As the vessel moved forward down the stream, the sails filling, Mrs. Black said to her young charge:

"Let us go below, Neva, and take a look at our quarters. The luggage and my maid have gone down."

Neva assented, and the two went into the cabin, which was found to be newly fitted up, and smelling unpleasantly of fresh paint. The cabin was small, affording room only for the table and divans around it, but there were three neat little state-rooms, newly carpeted and newly furnished with mattresses, blankets, bed-linen, towels, camp-chairs, and all toilet appurtenances. One of these state-rooms was appropriated by Mr. and Mrs. Black, the second by Neva, and the third assigned to the maid, a Frenchwoman completely won to the interests of her mistress.

"We shall be very comfortable here, Neva," said Mrs. Black, with affected gaiety. "The sea-air will bring the roses to your cheeks. I think you've not been looking well lately."

"I wish you had told me that we were to go to Yorkshire by sea," said Neva, gravely.

"How could I suppose, my dear child, that you cared whether you went by train or boat?" demanded Mrs. Black, in seeming surprise. "Your dear papa told me once that you were a fine sailor, and I planned this voyage as a little surprise to you—that's the truth, Neva."

"You are very kind," said the young girl, "but I would have preferred to know it beforehand. My friends will be anxious about me if I do not write as soon as I promised."

"Your friends?" Mrs. Black arched her brows.

"Are we not your friends?"

"You are, madam, I trust, but you are not my only friend. I leave those behind me who are dear to me, and who have a right to know my movements."

Mrs. Black looked significantly down upon the great diamond that sparkled in limpid splendour upon Neva's finger. She had noticed the jewel before, but had refrained from alluding to it.

"Is that ring the gift of one who has a right to know your movements?" she asked, smiling.

Neva blushed, but gravely assented.

"It is from Rufus Black?" asked the elder lady, well knowing to the contrary.

"No, madam," said Neva, bravely; "it is the gift of Lord Towyn, and is the emblem of our betrothal."

Mrs. Black bit her lips fiercely, but made no response. There was a hardness in her glittering eyes, and a cruel compression of her lips, that boded ill for the engagement thus proclaimed to her. One of the seamen was an excellent cook and steward, and presently a luncheon was spread in the cabin which proved very tempting to appetites sharpened by sea air.

Mrs. Artress had provided such an abundance of delicate stores that a cook was scarcely required. There were tin boxes of assorted biscuits, jars of pickles, boxes of fruits of every kind attainable in Covent Garden market, dried and crystallized fruits, smoked salmon, jerked beef and venison, pickled reindeers' tongues, and cheeses, cakes, and fancy breads in every variety.

After the luncheon the ladies went on deck. Mr. and Mrs. Craven Black paced to and fro, arm-in-arm, and Neva leaned idly upon the rail, watching the fleeting shores and the frequent sails and steamers, and tried to shake off the shadow of distrust and gloom that would creep over her soul.

At six o'clock dinner was served in the cabin. This second meal resembled the one that had preceded, but there were also roast beef, roast fowls, and vegetables, and wines. The swinging lamp was lighted in the cabin, which looked as comfortable as a yacht cabin can be made to look.

There is, at best, a dreariness about a ship's cabin or state-room which no art can conquer. And this cabin was no exception to the rule. Neva was glad to throw a shawl around her and go out again upon the deck.

The moon was shining when she sat down at one side of the deck in her folding deck chair, and the pale flood of silvery light illumined the white-capped waves, and the dark abysses of the waters, the sails of vessels going into port, and the dusky little steamers, making the whole scene a picture full of glorious lights and shadows, but a scene that seemed a picture rather than a reality.

The yacht was out in the North Sea now, battling with the short, chopping waves, but impelled onward by a fine breeze. She was well ballasted, seaworthy, and a swift sailer. What more could be desired by the guilty pair, whose hearts beat exultantly at their evil success, as they regarded the unconscious victim of their machinations?

"She has no suspicion," murmured Craven Black as he promenaded the deck, his wife leaning on his arm.

"None whatever. She is too guileless herself to suspect guile in others. And she trusts me implicitly," laughed Octavia Black, softly. "That old dotard, her father, did you and me a good turn when he so frequently urged his daughter to obey me and love me, and try to win my love. I declare, Craven, it's enough to make the old fellow come out of his grave to confront us— isn't it now?"

"If I were superstitious I might think so," said Black.

"If he did come out of his grave he'd be slightly astonished at finding how I had cajoled and hoodwinked him, eh, Craven?" said the woman, mockingly. "I'd like him to find out the truth where he is; I would, indeed. I hated the man; and to think you were jealous of him even when you urged me to marry him! Oh, Craven! Do you know, dear, speaking of jealousy, I was once jealous of Neva Wynde?"

"I did not know it."

"No? Well, I was. It was absurd, of course. I fancied you fell in love with her the first time you saw her."

Craven Black's heart stirred guiltily, and his fair cheek flushed. His love for Neva Wynde was not altogether dead yet. It smouldered in his breast, and although at times he believed that he felt an absolute hatred for her yet all the while a spark of the old passion remained that circumstances might again fan into a flame.

"We're likely to have more trouble than we looked for," said Mrs. Black, changing the subject, without awaiting a reply to her previous remark. "Neva owned to me since we came on board that she is engaged to Lord Towyn."

"I suspected it when I saw that new ring she wears. But go to her now, Octavia; she will suspect us of plotting against her if we whisper together longer."

Mrs. Black relinquished her husband's arm, and went to Neva's side, drawing a deck chair beside her.

"Enjoying the moonlight, Neva?" she asked. "And thinking of the earl, of course. I have not yet wished you joy of your future husband, and I suppose I ought to do so now. But first I would like to ask you if you have irrevocably chosen to obey your own wishes in regard to your marriage rather than to regard the last wishes of your father."

"I am not certain what were my father's wishes," said Neva, with a strange gravity, looking afar over the waters with her eyes of red gloom.

"Not certain? My dear child, you puzzle me. Did I not give into your own hands your father's last letter to you, received by me from India in the same mail that brought me the awful news of his death?"

"You gave me a letter purporting to be from my father, Mrs. Black," said the young girl, looking now at her companion; "but are you sure that it was not changed by any one while in your possession? Do not think I would hint one word against your watchful care of it, or—your good faith with me; but I am not altogether convinced that papa wrote that letter. Lord Towyn, on reading it, immediately declared it a forgery."

Mrs. Black started. "Did you show it to Lord Towyn?" she demanded.

"Yes, and he has it now in his possession, and will submit it to Sir John Friese and Mr. Atkins for their inspection and opinion," answered Neva.

Octavia Black's dark cheeks paled in the moonlight, and a sudden terror gathered in her hard black eyes.

"Neva," she exclaimed, harshly, "I am astonished at the singular want of delicacy that prompted your display of your father's last letter to Lord Towyn. Of course the earl believes the letter a forgery since he purposes marrying you himself. He believes whatever it is to his interest to believe."

"Lord Towyn is the soul of honour," asserted Neva, her cheeks flushing hotly. "He would tell the truth, whether it might be for or against his interests."

"What simple, childlike faith!" murmured Octavia Black, in affected admiration. "But, my dear child, Lord Towyn is no better than other men. Did—he think that I forged Sir Harold's letter?"

"No, he has too high an opinion of the lady who has been my father's wife," returned Neva, proudly, "to think such evil of her. But he fancied the true letter might have been replaced with a forged one. Mrs. Artress—Mr. Black—"

She paused abruptly, having been urged into saying more than she intended.

"Ah, Lord Towyn thinks them capable of the forgery? Let me tell you, Neva Wynde, that your father told me with his own lips that he had once hoped for your marriage with Lord Towyn, but that he desired in his later days with all his mind and heart that you should marry Rufus Black."

"Papa said that—to you?"

"He did, I swear it!" cried the woman, perjuring herself, in her eagerness to produce the desired impression upon Neva's mind.

"But Rufus said he did not know papa."

"That does not affect the fact that Sir Harold knew him," exclaimed Octavia Black, firmly. "Rufus did some brave deed at Oxford—saved a comrade's life or some such thing—and that first fixed Sir Harold's eyes upon him. From that moment Sir Harold watched the young fellow's progress. He saw him frequently, himself unseen. He studied his character, and he became resolved upon your marriage with Rufus."

"But, Mrs. Black, this is incredible!" exclaimed Neva, utterly refusing to believe the preposterous story, although until this moment her faith in her companion had remained unshaken. "Papa could not have wished me to marry a man he did not know personally. He would not have laid upon me the burden of a command—for that solemnly expressed desire was little less than a command—to marry a man, whom he admired for a single act of personal courage, but of whose character he was ignorant. I know papa too well to believe anything like this, Mrs. Black."

"You accuse me of falsehood then. I say such was his wish!" declared Octavia, doggedly and sullenly.

Neva looked pained, perplexed, and deeply troubled.

"If this indeed be so," she murmured, "then he could not have been in his right mind, terrible as it seems to utter the words. For there never was a truer, kinder father, or a nobler man, than papa. He thought my happiness of so much moment that he never would have dictated my course in such a vital matter as the acceptance or rejection of a lover, so long as the lover was worthy. I am sorry you have told me this, Mrs. Black. I am compelled to doubt papa's complete sanity, or—"

"Or me?" said the handsome Octavia, with an ugly frown. "You ought to know me too well by this time to doubt me. Old gentlemen frequently get odd ideas, which seem at variance with their usual character, but the having them does not prove them insane, only crochety. As for me, knowing Sir Harold's wishes, I did not doubt that you would act upon them as upon his actual command. Your father told you to obey me in all things. Is that command to be as lightly set aside?"

"Have I failed to consider your wishes, madam?" asked Neva, sorrowfully.

"Not until now. But it is my wish that you should marry Rufus Black. Nay, it is my command!"

Neva's pure, proud face looked very white in the moonlight as she answered:

"Then I must fail in my obedience to you now, Mrs. Black. Papa did not desire me to obey unreasonable commands, to the destruction of my own happiness. He would consider you unfaithful to the charge he gave you could he know that you are urging me to marry Rufus Black. My rejection of Rufus was final."

"We will see," said Mrs. Black, compressing her lips.

In an angry mood Octavia walked away, joining her husband on the opposite side of the park. Neva leaned over the low railing, her face upturned to the stars, and murmured:

"Perhaps—perhaps, after all, she forged the letter. How strange she seems to-night. I fear— I wish I had not come with her. A terrible gloom is on my soul to-night!"

That gloom grew heavier and darker, and the

pure face grew whiter and more sorrowful as the time went on, and the yacht bowled on towards the northward, bound—ah, whither?

(To be continued.)

MARJERIE HILTON.

CHAPTER I.

WE were sitting on the balcony, Maud, Marjerie Hilton and I, eagerly discussing the party of the previous night. It must have been a rather pretty picture from the lawn below, though that was the last thing in our thoughts at the time. The balcony was small, just large enough for our three chairs; indeed I think Marjerie had only a corner for her hassock; but that was a peculiarity of Marjerie's—she could always curl up in any nook and seem to have ample room for content.

Over our heads the gay striped awning fluttered in the south-west wind, and the cool shadow which it made was cheerfully lighted by Maud's eccentric costume. Maud never dressed like other girls. That day, I remember, she wore a tunic of some airy silken fabric in broad stripes of scarlet and white, with a wide sash of the same brilliant hue; but her olive skin, her heavy, dark hair, and, above all, the steady lustre of her large black eyes, so toned down this luxuriance of colour, and a certain regal look about her face so justified what remained, that no generous critic could object. I never saw a girl who wore diamonds like Maud; you never saw her without them—upon her fingers, in the tiny watch at her belt, and almost always in a sparkling cross upon her neck; but to-day, instead of this cross, she wore just one great solitaire in her heavy braids that gleamed out like a fiery eye whenever she turned her head, and gave me half unconsciously an eerie feeling. An uncut magazine lay upon her lap, and she flourished about in her hand a curiously carved pearl stiletto with which she had been making a pretence of severing the pages.

It is easy to describe a girl like Maud, because high lights and deep shadows make effects of themselves, but Marjerie was another sort of girl. She was not really a beauty, yet she was commonly called attractive. Maud was nothing without her accessories, but Marjerie lent a grace to everything she wore. She had no diamonds, indeed no gems of any kind, yet I have seen her with a bit of old lace, a fresh ribbon, and a trinket or two, manufacture effects which Maud could by no lavishness attain. I have seen both girls in their dressing-rooms, too, and that is a good test for beauty. Maud was a fright, Marjerie more beautiful than I ever saw her in a ball-room. If now you cannot see Marjerie as she sat there in her corner, her eyes bent low over her embroidery, in which she evinced an unaccountable interest that morning, no words of mine can more plainly portray her appearance.

"Yes," said Maud, slowly, yet with the quiet emphasis of one who knows her own mind, "Mr. Halpine is certainly rather remarkable. I own I had a prejudice against him. I always do take these people who come upon one with such a flourish of trumpets with just a grain of allowance, but there is no denying to Mr. Halpine the superiority which every one accords to him."

"Yet he is not handsome," said Marjerie.

"Well, there might be a difference of opinion there," replied Maud. "Still I will not contend. In fact, after the first five minutes one does not inquire about his beauty. It is himself one takes cognizance of."

"Can you tell wherein resides this nameless charm?" asked Marjerie, with, I thought, a trace of asperity in her voice, at which I wondered, as Marjerie was usually of an unruddied temper.

"Why, that reminds me," said Maud, "I did not see him speaking with you all the evening. Was he not introduced?"

"No," replied Marjerie, simply.

"Well then," said Maud, generously, "I shall take pleasure in making you acquainted, and you shall judge for yourself."

"No," said Marjerie, "I would rather have your opinion. What is it that makes him so irresistible?"

Maud cast down her eyes, and I began to suspect that, though she might be herself unconscious of it, this Mr. Halpine had taken a stronger hold upon her fancy than any of her thousand and one admirers had ever been able to do before.

"I do not know," she said, "that I can express it fully. It is like; is—there seems to be in him such fulness, such completeness, that by the side of him all other men seem imperfect, fragmentary, mere attempts at men."

I laughed heartily at this lucid explanation, but a shadow of pain crossed Marjerie's face, and she looked off upon the smiling, shimmering sea, and said, with an effort at playfulness:

"Mr. Halpine must be your fate, I think, Maud."
"No," Maud said, "I am not in love; neither am I, I trust, foolish enough to cast my heart at the feet of the first man I happen to fancy. In fact, I think I should not dare to love Mr. Halpine unless he asked me."

I confess that this conversation aroused in me, who had been prevented from attending the party, a violent desire to meet Mr. Halpine. My own affections were happily preoccupied, but the man who could arouse in Maud Inslay at one interview so much thoughtful interest, and even without so much as an introduction set Marjerie Hilton sighing, must be a curiosity to the observer of ordinary human nature.

We were silent for a moment, when suddenly I, who was sitting with my back to the balcony railing, was startled by a gay shout of laughter from the lawn below. It was Maud's wild brother Jack, who had come suddenly around the corner of the house, bringing some stranger with him to lunch.

"Mr. Halpine," he cried, "stand off a pace or two, and tell me if that is not a pretty nest of singing birds. Just imagine a frame put about them, huddled there in that shadow, and tell me if you can fancy a prettier picture."

So that tall, blonde young man was Mr. Halpine.

We did not hear his answer, which was some laughing response to Jack's enthusiasm, but Maud leaned with a softer grace than usual over the railing, and, bowing in reply to Mr. Halpine's salutation, inquired about their morning's luck at fishing.

"Oh!" said Marjerie, *sotto voce*; "then you knew that Mr. Halpine was coming in for lunch? You might have given me warning, I think," and she tossed a straying curl over her shoulder to hide the havoc the wind had made of it.

"Why, did not you know it also?" Maud replied, ingenuously. "But it doesn't matter; dress is nothing to you."

Marjerie said nothing, but I fancied she was thinking that, if dress was nothing to her, Maud had judged it to pass for something in Mr. Halpine's eyes, and had arrayed herself accordingly.

"Come," said Jack, "aren't you coming down here, or do you mean to sit there and tantalize us with the distant view of all that beauty?"

Jack was an open though hopeless admirer of Marjerie, and his pretty speeches always flew thick and fast, if not with too good aim, when she was present.

Marjerie had already risen, and was folding away her embroidery; Maud followed suit, and we all descended to the piazza, Marjerie stopping by the way in her own room to add some last touch to her toilet. I had, therefore, already made Mr. Halpine's acquaintance, and fancied that he was looking about a trifle uneasily for another face when Marjerie appeared silently at the doorway.

"Now, Marjerie," said Maud, gaily, "I shall have the promised pleasure of presenting Mr. Halpine," and Marjerie advanced and gave him her hand with a look in her eye which was not the look of a stranger.

"My friend Miss Hilton is staying with me for a few weeks," continued Maud, "and she is an acquisition to our circle which we particularly prize."

"I have fancied so," said Mr. Halpine, significantly, "by the rapturous descriptions of her which Mr. Inslay has been giving me during the morning."

"Oh, Jack is absurd about Marjerie," laughed Maud. "It will never do to believe the half he says about her, because he always makes her out to be perfection, which she certainly is not. But then she is a very dear and charming friend."

"It is not difficult to believe that," said Mr. Halpine.

The chat grew general, and presently lunch was announced. Mr. Halpine was seated by Marjerie at table, and I, sitting opposite, found my amusement in watching the behaviour of these two, the dainty politeness of his manner, and the frosty grace of hers. More and more it seemed impossible for me to believe that these two were strangers. Suggestions of by-gones hovered all about them, and presently a little incident occurred which confirmed my impression. Not until we were seated at table had I noticed that the result of Marjerie's visit to her mirror had been a half-blown rosebud nestled in her chestnut hair—just that and nothing more; the wind-tossed curls were not even smoothed.

"Since you are, like myself, a visitor here I may inquire how the air of the place agrees with you?" asked Mr. Halpine, with that same undertone which I had noticed before.

"Admirably," replied Marjerie, with somewhat more than her usual reserve.

"If I were to remain here long I think I should be tempted to undertake the study of navigation," he replied, a little at random it would seem. "My ideas of latitude and longitude are very vague and uncertain at present, but unfortunately I shall not probably have the necessary leisure."

Marjerie started a little, and the rosebud fell beside her plate.



[SNATCHED FROM THE DEEP.]

"I shall take that as an omen," he replied; and picking up the rose slowly, with a glance into her eyes for permission, was about to fasten it into his button-hole; but Jack, the irrepressible, cried at that moment:

"Fie, Marjerie, to give my rose to Mr. Halpine! I did not think you could coquet so."

Marjerie flushed painfully, and made some faint reply, while Mr. Halpine quietly laid the rose upon the table, and presently, unnoticed by Jack, Marjerie sent it out with her plate.

Mr. Halpine left soon after lunch, and, as he shook hands with Marjerie, I, standing at a little distance from them, fancied I observed some occult understanding between them, but I could not be certain.

When he had gone, Maud, who had behaved that day with a dignity and sweetness which I had never seen in her before, said to us all, in her frank fashion: "Is he not magnificent? Marjerie, does he not seem to you quite unlike all the men you ever met before?"

Marjerie smiled.

"If, as would seem," she said, "you are bent on making a conquest, Maud, you must use haste and good strategy, for Mr. Halpine intimated to me that his stay would be a brief one."

Maud knitted her brows and said nothing, but I felt certain from that moment that she had indeed determined upon a conquest.

CHAPTER II.

MARJERIE HILTON was a friend in whom I felt the deepest interest. I had known her from youth—so well indeed that it seemed impossible to me, upon reflection, that she should have had any serious entanglement with any gentleman without my knowledge.

Her life had indeed been a varied one, and a winter in London, and now and then perhaps a few weeks at the seaside, might possibly give scope for a flirta-

tion which might have escaped the gossips; but Mr. Halpine was certainly a gentleman of honour and integrity, and I could see no reason why there should exist a secret understanding between himself and any young lady of Marjerie's character and position; yet a secret understanding there was I felt certain.

Under ordinary circumstances I should have dismissed at once all interest in the matter, considering that if the parties desired to indulge in the dangerous felicity of a secret it was plainly no business of mine; but with the deep interest I felt in Marjerie I could not so easily rid myself of a certain friendly solicitude in her behalf.

It was therefore with deep interest, beside some little amusement, that I watched Maud's not-at-all-concealed tactics. She was bent on keeping Mr. Halpine within the scope of her influence, and almost assuredly for this reason she immediately announced her intention of giving a masquerade ball.

It was to be a very select affair, the invitations to be confined to the most unexceptionable of her wide circle of acquaintances, but was expected to be as magnificent as it was select.

She relied upon her own and her brother Jack's influence with Mr. Halpine to keep him till after that event, and I think she meant by that time to have made fast her toils about him so that he should be content to remain afterwards for her sake.

Mr. Halpine fell readily into the scheme; and in the study of characters and the various preparations which were going forward proved a most efficient ally.

Of course all these things brought him much to the house, and I had ample opportunities for watching the progress of my little drama. I think, however, I should have been a long time in arriving at the key of it if a letter from a distant friend had not placed it, unsought, in my hand.

"I hear that Morris Halpine is with you this summer. Do tell me if it is true, as I suspect, that he is

attracted by Marjerie Hilton. I suppose not three people besides myself know the circumstances of their previous meeting, but it has always been a matter of interest to me, and I beg that you will keep me acquainted with the state of affairs between them. The story is this:

"Three years ago Marjerie was called by the illness of an aunt—that aunt indeed from whom she gets her name and her small allowance—to Ferndale. The place is near us, as you know, and Mrs. Banks is my intimate friend.

"Halpine was then in college, but was spending a vacation with Jeremy Banks, who was his classmate and friend.

"Mrs. Banks's illness being only one of her customary nervous attacks, Halpine still remained in the house, and for two weeks the two were thrown constantly together, and Halpine at least was very much attracted; but he is a singular creature, the frankest of men about all superficial things, but in regard to vital matters as deep as the grave.

"From what I hear I think that Marjerie must have got almost beyond her depth with him; but she, too, is not given to talking of her own affairs. But at the last it came out that, however sincere Mr. Halpine's sentiments might be towards Marjerie, he was already fettered by a most foolish and impracticable tie. It was an engagement such as no man of the world or even any ordinary youth of practical sense and quick impulses would for a moment have entered into; but Halpine is a man of more than ordinary delicacy and an almost Quixotic sense of honour. Circumstances led to an explanation of his relations, then, as I have heard, Marjerie said to him:

"Mr. Halpine, if the knowledge causes me pain I have only myself to reproach; but I have one favour to ask of you, and that is, if we ever meet again, as I sincerely trust we never may, that you will treat me in all respects as though these past two weeks had never been. So few of the friends of either of us are aware of the circumstances that this is not impracticable. It is my wish, and I think I know you well enough to feel certain that you will respect it."

"He promised, and for three years they have faithfully lived out the agreement, but last spring the tie which bound him was strangely and unexpectedly broken. Now I hear they have met again. Do keep me informed of their progress."

Of course this letter set me thinking. I knew Marjerie Hilton well—knew her for a girl of strong character, refined and decided tastes, and much pride, but above all I believed her capable of deep and true affection. If, as would seem from this letter, she had ever been drawn into any false position in regard to Mr. Halpine, I knew how sore would be the struggle between wounded pride and natural feeling, and how such a struggle three years continued could not fail to leave deep traces in her soul.

From the curious sort of pantomime which I had observed between these two I could but feel that they were still at cross purposes, and I feared very much that some of those infinitely numerous and subtle influences which always seem to hover around the inception of love affairs might yet succeed in parting two who, I began to feel, were well fitted to make each other happy.

In particular I was fearful of Maud Inslay's influence over Mr. Halpine. She had strong characteristics, a generous nature, and while I truly believed Mr. Halpine to be far above any directly mercenary influences it did seem to me rational to suppose that Maud's almost unlimited command of money, and the lavish use she made of it for the entertainment of her friends, would have much to do in turning any doubtful balance. One thing grew daily more and more apparent—Maud was deeply in love, and, with her usual frankness, made small show of concealing the fact.

The approaching masquerade afforded Mr. Halpine an excellent excuse for extending his sojourn at the seaside to several weeks, thus carrying out what I believe had been his intention from the first, although modified probably by his having construed unfavourably the circumstances of his meeting with Marjerie, and Jack Inslay's very open admiration of her. Meantime there were no end of walks and sails and drives, and lunches and dinners and balls projected by the restless Maud, and the excitement these engendered was one of the influences which I feared would operate against a true solution of our social problem.

Marjerie, partly, I fancied, to hide the ravages which pain and suspense were making upon her spirits, grew excessively and artificially gay, while Maud, on the other hand, seemed really subdued and deepened in character by the constant influence of Mr. Halpine; so the two girls seemed neither of them to be occupying the simple, natural ground of their own individuality, which circumstance was of itself an additional complication.

Among Maud's various resources was a yacht, the

property of her cousin, Raymond Drasdy, but left at her command during Mr. Drasdy's temporary absence. The "Una" was a charming little craft, of fine sailing qualities, well manned, and provided with a competent skipper.

"Maud," said Raymond, as he had left her, "you might sail round the world if you pleased in the 'Una,' and I place no restrictions whatever upon you. Go where you please, take whom you please, and return when you please. I shall not be back probably before September."

"How charming!" Maud had cried; "the 'Una,' I foresee, will be an immense accession to our party." Yet still for a week I think she contemplated no more than an occasional day's pleasure on board.

But one evening as we were gathered on the broad verandah of the Inlay cottage, Maud and her brother, Marjerie, Mr. Halpine and myself, a little incident occurred which developed possibly the most important chapter in our summer's history. Maud, always picturesque, was arrayed in some shimmering greenish gauze, and reclining languidly in a curious chair of Chinese canes. Marjerie, with the inevitable Jack beside her, leaned pensively against a column of the verandah, and gazed absently far off upon the hazy sea, over which a full moon, a trifle obscured by clouds, was shedding a watery radiance.

"When this moon shall wane what witching nights there will be upon that sea," she said, half to herself, for Jack was little given to sentiment. "In all nature there is nothing so weird and witching as a waning moon."

Mr. Halpine turned as if to answer this remark, and Marjerie, seeing that he had overheard it, flushed as if she had been guilty of an indiscretion; but Mr. Halpine, though chilled somewhat by her infrequent and chary favours, had not yet given up an occasional attack upon her frosty stronghold.

"I think, Miss Hilton," he said, "that you are the only person whom I ever heard make that observation, yet I have frequently had the same thought. A waning moon has been to me for years a charmed omen, perhaps because under a waning moon occurred to me a crisis in my life; but that was under forest boughs and not upon the open sea," he added, in an undertone.

Always during these passages between the two Maud grew uneasy. She could have known nothing of their previous history, but there was always a fine accord between their natures which in some subtle and perhaps all unconscious way would make itself felt by even a casual observer, and Maud was growing sensitive.

"Why," said Maud, "is there really anything peculiar about a waning moon? I'm sure I never noticed."

"Did you not know," replied Mr. Halpine, in a bantering tone, as if he meant to break the spell of this allusion, "that it is only by the light of a waning moon that mermaids can be seen? Fancy them sitting upon the wave-washed rocks, combing out their golden tresses in the pale, witching light, the green and silver sea shimmering all about them."

"By Jove!" broke in Jack, most unsentimentally, "let's go on a mermaid hunt. What's the use of having a yacht and permission to sail round the world if we can't get up a sensation with it? Halpine, what do you say, shall we show these girls a mermaid?"

"By all means, since the Fates seem propitious," responded Mr. Halpine, with mock gravity.

Maud was enthusiastic in an instant.

"How charming!" she said. "Here's Belle—that was my silent self—for chaperone, and we can be as select as we please. Whom shall we invite?"

"Only ourselves, if I am to be allowed a voice," said Mr. Halpine. "We have seen a great deal of all the world lately."

"Now, Jack, you and Mr. Halpine must consult the almanack to-morrow and find out by the moon when the weather is likely to be right for the mermaids, and Marjerie and I will pack our trunks, and in three days, at the farthest, we'll be ready for a start."

"And can we be discreet?" asked Mr. Halpine. "If it should get abroad the mermaids might hear the news, you know, and so fall us. Mermaids are very shy game."

"Then it shall be a dead secret," said Maud. "Really this is a sensation."

CHAPTER III:

It chanced that the tide did not serve us to put out to sea till late at night. A small boat came to shore for us, however, in the rosy dusk of an August evening, and the whole party, with all necessary luggage, were soon bestowed in it. The scene as we rowed softly down the silent starlight of the harbour was one of rare and ineffable beauty. Already the glamour of the mermaid hunt was upon us, and

all things seemed to conspire to confirm the spell. The rosy sky, the lovely scene outlined in shadow, the trembling lights from ship and shore, the far-off sentry's call as he paced his lonely beat upon the gray fort walls, and from a distance more remote, as if it were a wandering echo from Paradise, a waft of band-music that just faintly suggested one of Von Weber's delicious melodies. Under the bows of the boat the waves parted with a murmurous sound, and the silver dip of the oars was like the tinkle of fairy bells.

It was not an unusual thing for Marjerie to be silent and pensive, but this evening Maud also subdued her prattle, and even Jack seemed to be penetrated after some sort with the witchery of the scene. Possibly Mr. Halpine's heart may have been as full as that of any of the party, for I think from the first he had hoped that Fate had something in store for him out of this expedition, but it was like his suave and buoyant temper to refuse to succumb to influences which swayed more or less every one else, and he it was who kept the conversation from flagging, and served by his cheerful gossip to keep us all above the region of sentimentality and hysteria.

"Really," he said as we drew near the yacht, "I think the Fates will play us fair this time. Certainly nothing could be finer than their promise at the start. See how like a thing of magic the 'Una' lies, her delicate and rakish figure just outlined against the radiance of the coming moon, and her binnacle-light twinkling like the eye of a coquette. Miss Maud, it was a genuine inspiration which prompted this adventure."

"Do you know," said Maud, "I have a presentiment that something ill will come of it? I dreamed of bees last night, and bees to me mean always loss and disappointment."

"And I," said Marjerie, "dreamed of wearing a golden crown, but I had to first lift it off a grinning death's-head before I could place it on my own."

The girls were getting too sentimental to suit Jack's mood, and he cried out, rather irreverently:

"And I dreamed of being at a ball, and dancing with Miss Acres. I saw the sun and moon waltzing in the midnight sky. Can anybody interpret that dream?"

"I think," said Maud, laughing, "that it must have been intended for a warning. I am thankful that we have a skilful skipper and crew, and are not to be left altogether at the mercy of your knowledge of sailorcraft or your presence of mind."

We had reached the yacht by this time, and, having made the ascent to her deck in safety, found all things in readiness for a start as soon as wind and tide would serve.

"Now," said Mr. Halpine, "let us arrange our programme. Captain Gray informs me that if the wind holds fair we may be on blue water by to-morrow at this time, in a region favourable for our enterprise. To-morrow night I fancy we shall want to spend on deck. Would it not be better to take supper, and, after an hour or two of this fine moonlight, retire early, so as to be in spirits for the sport of to-morrow?"

"Oh," said Jack, "confound programmes! Let us have supper first, it is nine o'clock, and after that let each one do as one pleases."

Supper was accordingly ordered, and a merry party we were. Maud played hostess as was her right, assisted by Mr. Halpine. It was, I could see, a circumstance which often caused Mr. Halpine annoyance that, there being no other gentleman of the party save Jack Inlay, he seemed somehow to fall of right into Maud's possession, and to be debarred, except upon rare occasions, from making himself exclusively agreeable to Marjerie. But on this night the sea did him good service, for scarcely was supper over when, the "Una" having got well under way and passed the fort at a spanking rate with a fair breeze from the north-west, Maud complained of a headache, and was forced to retire.

Marjerie started up at once to accompany her, but Jack exclaimed:

"That is too absurd, Marjerie. A little sleep and a glass of brandy when she wakes, if she would take it, will set Maud all right. She is a splendid sailor, and you would be a goose to lose this fine moonlight for her qualms."

Mr. Halpine, too, protested against being deserted, and I, thinking it a mercy to all concerned, declared against going into retirement before the wane, weird moon, that now was riding steadily up towards the zenith, should have spread her full witchery over the scene. So Marjerie was prevailed upon, and we gathered into a little knot under the awning which served as well to keep off the night damps as the mid-day sun, and gave ourselves up to a quiet enjoyment of the scene. Finally, Jack, whose habits had a good deal the mastery of him, brought out his pipe, and declared for a smoke; and I, feeling will-

ing to lend a hand to the puzzled Fates who presided over Mr. Halpine's destiny, drew him off aft, under pretence of giving sea-room to the smoke of his meerschaum. We did not go so far away that I could not keep the two young people well in my eye, and as I came to know something afterwards of the conversation which ensued I may as well detail it now for the reader's benefit.

I cannot tell by what slow and fine degrees the conversation veered round from the chat of the hour to more personal topics. I think it was passionate, pulsating quotations from Owen Meredith which led Mr. Halpine to say at the close of a tender and rhythmic utterance:

"Does it ever seem to you, Miss Hilton, that while certain of our experiences seem to go on repeating themselves with infinite weariness, we put on new friendships and put them off, after they have served the purposes of our spiritual growth, much as children go through the series of physical ills their youthful flesh is heir to, as a matter of unpleasant necessity which probably has some occult though certainly undreamed-of use—while, I say, life is mostly made up of this wearisome repetition of common-places, there comes now and then an experience straight out of heaven, an experience which we recognize at once must belong to our eternal life and have a lasting influence upon it? From the first I have somehow felt that this mermaid hunt, light and trivial as it seems in its origin, belonged to that order of things."

Marjerie smiled a weary smile.

"I don't know," she said. "The wearisome common-places are familiar enough to me, but the deep realities which seem to take hold upon eternity are, I confess, less familiar. I wonder sometimes what all this glittering, shiny pagentry which we call life may mean, and out here under the stars the feeling grows burdensome to me that in Heaven, in Nature, in Life, are hidden grander things for me than I have yet dreamed of. What is the key to it all? How shall one find the true meaning of this ever-recurring I, and all its infinite relations to this universe about us?"

"That is a question which has so long puzzled the philosophers that I shall not attempt to elucidate it. Does it ever occur to you, as a profitable intellectual exercise from this continual and sublime exhibition of nature all around us, to select that one trait of which you stand most in need, to consider it as certainly an element of the great eternal mind, and so a possible attribute of your own soul, and then go on perpetually striving for its full and perfect attainment?"

"If I were to do that," said Marjerie, "I should take for my example the everlasting mountains, steady, strong, immovable. I do often long for the strength of mind and heart to stand still in my place, and, if I cannot labour, wait."

"Contradictory as it may seem," said Mr. Halpine, "to wait patiently and gracefully is after all a greater test of strength than any labour. One works off so much of that fretting, worrying, complaining spirit which is born only of weakness and incapacity. To subdue it by more force of will, or what is better, by the cultivation of a serene faith, is one of the greatest of spiritual achievements."

They were silent then, something in the hearts of both of them responding to this sentiment with a force that transcended language.

By this time the moon was shining in dim and chastened glory over all the wide waste of water. The shore, with its twinkling lights, lay far behind us, and before us all was misty, shadowy, uncertain. A gentle breeze that seemed the very voice of the night was murmuring through our sails, and the monotonous ripple of the water under the bows of the boat was the syren song of restfulness.

"Do you know," said Marjerie, "I wish there were no physical necessity for sleep? There are days and days on shore when I would willingly be unconscious, but to waste one hour of this serenity, that seems so unlike the cloying excitement of ordinary life as almost to convince one that it is verily akin to the rest of heaven, seems wicked."

"I have a fortunate idiosyncrasy," said Mr. Halpine, smiling, "which enables me to do with far less sleep than most mortals. I shall not leave the deck till the stars pale and the sky is pearly. Go you to rest therefore. I will keep watch for both, and to-morrow, if you will give me a quiet moment apart from the rest, I will recite to you what the sea and sky have told me."

He extended his hand to her, and she took it, then, lingering one moment for a farewell look at the dim and wide horizon, said:

"This has been a pleasant evening, has it not?"

"Yes, so pleasant as quite to remind me of some scenes—"

"Do not recall them," she interrupted, "but if you ever pray—and we worldlings do pray sometimes, I think, as heartily as though we were oftener on our

knees—ask that I may have strength to forget them also."

He looked at her with tender regret in his eyes, as she wrenched her hand from his and sped lightly away. I do not know if Marjerie dreamed that night, but I think at least her sleep was sweeter for the thought that Morris Halpine was still pacing the "Una's" deck, and very possibly cheering the silence with a thought of her.

Breakfast was late on the following morning, but Maud was in her freshest, brightest spirits. All day, however, there seemed a weight of something on her mind which no one could understand.

Even Mr. Halpine's attentions were more absently received than usual, and during one of her long seclusions in the tiny cabin that gentleman found no difficulty in securing his *tête-à-tête* with Marjerie. I never knew the purport of it, but I judged, from the serene and pensive attitude of both of them that it was of a nature to quiet the perturbations which had recently disturbed the peace of both. At the last, however, I heard Mr. Halpine say:

"Why cannot we let by-gones be by-gones, Marjerie, and commence the scene anew? Will you not give me an even chance with the rest of the world?"

"Mr. Halpine," was the answer, "true friendship implies equality. When I am strong enough so that I can look over all my past life with equanimity, and feel that, whatever mistakes I may have committed in the past, from present heights I can afford to smile at my errors, then I shall be equal to the achievement of forgetting; but not before."

"Marjerie, love is not so critical as this."

"Very likely not; then your question is answered."

But there was a look in her face which seemed to say:

"Such love as I am capable of may not indeed satisfy your requirement, but it is of no light import to me."

"Marjerie," he said, tenderly, but very gravely, "your inference is not the correct one. I only meant to imply that if it is not love which makes you so rigorous it may be some less potent and—dare I say it?—less worthy motive. True love is self-forgetting."

"You press me too hard," she said. "Let us waive the subject altogether. There are others who have claims upon you."

"Marjerie," he said, "now you are not wholly sincere. I confess when I first met you here I thought there were others who had a claim on you, but since the first three days I have done you no such injustice. Will you not be equally fair with me?"

They had almost quarrelled, yet they were both relieved. Some sudden shock of feeling, I thought, was all that was necessary to bring them into correspondence and union. The thought was a forecast which Fate soon fulfilled.

We had lunched and taken our quiet siesta thereafter preparatory to a night upon deck—indeed the sun was rapidly sinking towards his watery rest—when Maud came to me and begged an interview in which to impart a project she cherished for our evening entertainment. It was a mad scheme, at least so I feared, but her enthusiasm would bear no check, and I was obliged to acquiesce and promise all the assistance which I could give.

Accordingly I passed an hour or two of the early evening in the cabin with her and Jack, all the time with an ear open to the slow promenade of the pairs of feet upon the deck, and the mingling of two tender, earnest voices, the one as I judged in entreaty, the other in almost fearful denial.

"Foolish girl," I thought to myself, "will she never hearken to reason?"

But after all I chid myself, for it did not seem to me that a man like Morris Halpine could long fail to find the way to a heart of which he so evidently already held the key.

The night wore on apace. A light scud drifting over the sky filled the blue dome of heaven with flickering shadows, which added to the weird effect of the pale radiance of the lessening moon, and as we were all gathered upon the deck, chatting gaily of mermaids and mermen, and the other charmed denizens of Neptune's domains, I own it did not seem the least impossible for some magical vision to rise from the phosphorescent waves and captivate our longing eyes. It was towards midnight that Marjerie, betraying by a shiver her sensitiveness to the night air, went at my request to the cabin for a shawl, and I bade Mr. Halpine accompany her and make certain that she did not return without a glass of wine.

"Indeed," I said, "you may as well keep her inside for half an hour, for I do not care to have an ague patient on my hands to-morrow."

They obeyed my injunctions very literally, and when they came slowly out upon the deck again were apparently so much absorbed in each other

as not to notice that I sat upon the deck alone. Yet I could plainly see that they were no nearer an understanding than they had been an hour ago.

Another hour passed, then, looking far off to the left, it seemed to me that I discovered some strange object, and I quickly pointed it out to Mr. Halpine.

"It is certainly a rock in mid-ocean," he said, "and there is an appearance of human beings upon it."

Mr. Halpine hailed the skipper instantly, and bade him bring the best glass on board. As he looked his face grew a little pale and overcast, and I noticed that for the first time he glanced about as if in uneasy search for our missing companions.

"Captain," he said, "change the yacht's course, so that we may come within range of that rock yonder. We are hunting mermaids, you know, and it seems as if we might have started up the game."

The captain gave the necessary orders, with a comical leer in his eye, and in fifteen minutes we were within hailing distance of the object in question. The moon shone out clear and unobscured, and by the aid of glasses we obtained a very accurate view of the rock. Then indeed we beheld, not a mermaid only, but a merman also.

The female was dressed in floating, gauzy garments of pale sea-green, her neck and shoulders were bare, and her long hair swept the wave-washed rocks. In her hand she held a glass, by which she combed her ébon locks, and from head to foot she was literally glowing with diamonds and rubies and emeralds.

The merman was a far more awkward and less self-possessed creature, and I thought looked very much as if a good ship's deck and a lunch of boned turkey and oysters would agree better with his constitution than a rock in mid-ocean and no visible means of gastronomical support.

"Keep silence," I said; "let us hear if she can sing."

At the same instant, in a cracked, Ophelia-like voice that was yet melodious, she commenced a strain of weird, uncanny music, so modified by winds and waves that it was long before we recognized its likeness to a familiar opera air. So perfect indeed was the illusion that Marjerie was, I believe, carried perfectly captive by it.

We answered the mermaid's strain with such music as we could improvise as we slowly made the circuit of the rock; and any one beholding us from the distance might readily have believed that some potent spell was working for our destruction. As indeed there was.

We had not half exhausted the sensation of our discovery when the skipper approached Mr. Halpine and made a quiet, yet very earnest communication whose tenor escaped me.

Mr. Halpine immediately gave what seemed a welcome order, at the same time taking an observation of the heavens, which were fast becoming obscured. At the same moment he hailed the figures on the rock.

"Hullo, Mr. Merman, there's a squall brewing. Our skipper shows the white feather. Could you not be induced to come on board and sail our craft?"

The merman appeared manifestly uneasy, but his companion still sang on undisturbed.

"Let us go below," I said. "I think they will return all the quicker."

"No," said Mr. Halpine, a little annoyed, "the mermaid must be caught, I see. I had intended when this sport was over to go out in the only boat they have left us, but it is madness for them to wait for that now."

"Oh, do go at once," pleaded Marjerie. "Maud will never come away till you do, and it would be so dreadful if they were to be drowned."

He called to them once more, but either they did not fully realize the danger or else Maud was carried wholly away by excitement, for they made no move to leave the rock.

Mr. Halpine then ordered out the boat, which indeed the skipper had already prepared, and, with a good seaman for company, he put off to the rock. They had just time to reach it before the squall struck them. They experienced a great difficulty in re-embarking, but at last the boat put off on its perilous journey. The wind was now blowing furiously, and the waves were white with froth, but both Jack and Mr. Halpine were good swimmers, and Maud, to do her justice, was now too thoroughly frightened not to obey orders implicitly.

For an hour they toiled and struggled in that yeasty sea before they could safely approach the yacht—the winds all the while shrieking a chorus in our ears that could not fail to waken the liveliest apprehensions, while the waves tore and pitched about our little craft so madly that it needed little help from the imagination to conceive that the frate spirits of the deep were avenging themselves for our rash profanation of their retreat.

The boat reached the yacht's side at length, and by the help of skipper and crew Maud and Jack were safely landed, the former wrapped snugly in shawls and blankets, but drenched to the skin nevertheless. Her long hair was wound hastily about her head, and her glittering jewels, mostly paste from the costumer's, bestowed safely in her bosom. Without stopping to look behind her, she ran swiftly to the cabin, and I, anxious for her comfort, speedily followed.

Marjerie was so intent upon the fate of Mr. Halpine that she remained clinging to the taffrail and watching for his ascent by the yacht's chaise.

As he sprang from the boat, however, the yacht gave a lurch, he missed his footing, and fell into the black and foamy deep below. A scream from Marjerie tore through the heavens like the despairing cry of a lost spirit.

"Save him!" she cried. "Oh! save him!" and for an instant Jack, who fortunately stood beside her, had hard work to hold her upon the deck.

A fearless sailor plunged into the sea, and others lowered ropes, and, almost before one could tell it, the half-drowned man was laid drenched and senseless upon the deck.

Then indeed Marjerie forgot everything else but that Morris Halpine loved her, and that life would be naught to her without him, and with tears, and entreaties and fondest kisses, bent over him, and chafed his hands and wrung the dripping brine from his hair.

"Give way," said Jack, at last, rather gruffly; "a strong glass of brandy is all he needs. Hanged if I don't think he's making half of it."

With desperate energy he poured a half-glass of the fiery liquid down Halpine's throat, and in a moment more they had the satisfaction of seeing him open his eyes.

Marjerie stayed but for one look at his brightening face, then fled to the cabin.

I experienced at first a good deal of solicitude for Maud in consequence of the serious termination of her frolic, but it proved useless. Her glowing neck and arms were really of enamel, hired from a costumer's, and underneath her airy raiment she had taken care to wear substantial flannels, so that a slight hoarseness from singing too much in the open air was all the evil that resulted. What she experienced when it came out, as it did before we reached port, that Mr. Halpine owed to his perils by sea a tender acknowledgment from Marjerie, she never allowed to transpire. I think she suffered for a season, but Maud was of a generous spirit, and she never allowed her love for Marjerie to be obscured by any cloud of jealousy.

As soon as we reached home Maud plunged at once into preparations for the masquerade. She determined to make it simply a fancy dress ball, and to open the house to every eligible visitor. She was not in a mood to do things by halves. Neither would she be cheated of her sensation. She gave out immediately on our return that we had been out in the "Una," on a mermaid hunt, having previously received trustworthy information concerning the whereabouts of this rare game; that we had had the most astounding success, the whole party having been favoured with a clear view of a pair of these remarkable inhabitants of the sea, and Mr. Halpine having actually caught one, which he proposed to exhibit at the forthcoming ball. Her next move was to command that the whole hunting party should appear in appropriate costume, to commemorate our wonderful expedition.

The ball was indeed a great success. Mrs. Inelay received the guests, and when the party was well assembled, and expectation was on tip-toe, a door slid back, and Jack, gorgeously attired as Neptune, with Maud as a sea-nymph sparkling with her favourite jewels, preceded Mr. Halpine magnificently gotten up as a Norse king, while on his arm leaned the most beautiful mermaid one could imagine.

A delicate silken mask, which almost deceived even the keenest vision, prevented a recognition of her features; her beautiful brown hair was flowing in wavy profusion far below her waist. A tunic of gauze, with large flowing sleeves open to the shoulder, displayed her slender figure to advantage, while her skirt fell in folds of scaly silver to the floor, and the train at the back was cunningly fashioned to resemble the tail of a dolphin. A jewelled hand-glass and a profusion of pearls, a gift from her lover, completed her costume.

She remained masked till supper-time, and very few had detected her identity; but when she laid aside her visor Mr. Halpine introduced her to the company in a few pithy sentences so phrased as to leave upon the minds of his auditors no doubt as to the reality of the capture which he had made or the pleasure which it afforded him.

J. W.

SIR RICHARD WALLACE has bought for 100,000fr. the fine tapestries representing the history of Jason

and Medea that were exhibited at a shop in the Rue Richelieu, where they were much admired by amateurs.

FACETIE.

HEAVE HO!—A boy who had heard of sailors heaving up anchors wanted to know if it was sea-sickness that made them do it.

A QUESTION to ask a hungry boy:—"Whether it would be more pleasant to be a pioneer than to be near a pie?"

RESPECTFULLY DECLINED.—A Connecticut clergyman declined an addition of 100 dollars to his salary, for this reason, among others, that the hardest part of his labour heretofore had been the collection of his salary, and it would kill him to try to collect a hundred dollars more.

A MAN on being told by a generous farmer that he would give him a barrel of cider, asked him if he would bring it to his house. "Certainly," replied the farmer, "with pleasure." "Well," said the grateful recipient, "what will you pay me for the barrel when the cider is gone?"

A LITTLE girl remarked to her mamma on going to bed: "I'm not afraid of the dark!" "No, of course you are not," replied her mamma. "I was a little afraid once when I went into the pantry in the dark to get a tart." "What were you afraid of?" asked her mamma. "I was afraid I could not find the tarts."

PARTINGTONIAN.—Mrs. Boffin, an ignorant parvenue, having "come in for a heap of money," is enabled to keep a footman. She has recently been to the theatre, and has seen that in the stage drawing-room footmen never bring notes in their hands. Her servant, Thomas, has just been guilty of so doing. Immediately she draws herself up, tries to look with Belgravian hauteur on the menial as she observes, "Thomas, I'm surprised at your bringing in a note like that. In future always bring it on a salver."

A GENTLE HINT.—An ardent young man was the victim of misplaced confidence a short time ago. He was particularly sweet on a very young girl, and called one evening, having previously paid her several visits. The girl's parents, thinking both too young to begin to keep company with each other, gave a gentle hint to that effect—first, by calling the girl out of the room and sending her to bed, and, secondly, by the lady of the house bringing in a huge slice of bread and butter, spread with jam, and saying to the youth, in her kindest manner, "There, take this, and go home; it is a long way, and your mother will be anxious."

MY WIFE AND I.
We never fight, my wife and I,
As other couples do,
Our little matrimonial sky
Is of the bluest blue.
She never bears me in my den
(My study I should say),
She vows I am the best of men,
But then—she has her way!

Some wives are never pleased unless
They wring from you a cheque,
Wherewith to buy some costly dress
Or jewels for their neck.
My little witch ne'er asks from me
The value of a pin—
She is so good and true, you see,
But then—she keeps the tin!

"'Twas not!" "It was!" "It was!" "'Twas not!"
Thus ever scold and fight
Full many a luckless pair, I wot,
From morning until night.
If e'er we have a word or two
The skirmish soon is past,
Those words are mild and very few,
But then—she has the last!

A COOL QUESTION.—Bob Dodginton was one day walking down Bond Street, when a borrowing acquaintance rushed from the opposite side of the way, and expressed great delight at meeting him; "for," said he, "I am wonderfully in want of a guinea." Dodginton winced, and, taking out his purse, showed that he had no more than half a guinea. "A thousand thanks!" exclaimed the persecutor, half forcing the coin from beneath the owner's fingers, "that will do very well for the present;" and cleverly changed the subject to a good story. When they had parted the impudent borrower turned back to Dodginton, saying, "By-the-by, when will you pay me that half-guinea?" "Pay you! what do you mean?" "Why, I intended to borrow a guinea of you, and have only got half; but I'm not in any hurry for the other. Name your own time, only pray keep it."

THE LECTURER SILENCED.

When Doctor Dodge, an eccentric physician, was

lecturing on the evils of tea and coffee he happened to meet one morning at the breakfast-table a witty son of Erin of the better class. Conversation turned on the doctor's favourite subject, and he addressed our friend as follows:

"Well," said the doctor, "if I convince you that they are injurious to your health will you abstain from their use?"

"Sure I will, sir."

"How often do you use tea and coffee?"

"Morning and night, sir."

"Well," said the doctor, "do you ever experience a slight dizziness of the brain on going to bed?"

"I do—indeed I do," replied the son of Erin.

"And a sharp pain through the temples in the morning?"

"Very often I do, sir."

"Well," said the doctor, with an air of confidence and assurance, "that is the tea and coffee."

"Is it, indeed? Faith and I always thought it was the whisky I drink!"

The company roared with laughter, and the doctor quietly retired.

GROWING OLD TOGETHER.

Do you know I am thinking, to-morrow

We shall pass, on our journey through life,

One more of the milestones that bring us

Still nearer the goal, my good wife?

The glad anniversary morning

Of our wedding-day cometh once more,

And its evening will find us still waiting

Who had thought to have gone long before.

We are old, wife: I know by the furrows

Time has ploughed in your brow, once so fair;

I know by the crown of bright silver

He has left for your once-raven hair;

I know by the frost on the flowers

That brightened our life at its dawn;

I know by the graves in the church-yard,

Where we counted our dead yestern-morn.

Your way has been humble and toil-worn.

Your guest has been Trouble, good wife—

Part sunshine, more trials and sorrows,

Have made up our record through life.

But may the thought cheer you, my dear one:

Your patience and sweet, clinging love

Have made for me here such a heaven,

I have asked, "Is there brighter above?"

In life's winter, sweet wife, we are living,

But its storms all unheeded will fall.

What care we, who have love and each other,

Who have proved, each to each, all in all?

Hand in hand we await the night coming;

Giving thanks, down the valley we go;

For to love and to grow old together

Is the highest bliss mortals can know.

Some children are still left to bless us,

And lighten our hearts day by day;

If hope is not always fruition,

We will strive to keep on the right way.

We have sowed, and have reaped; but the

harvest

That garners the world we await,

And haply, at last, we may enter

Together the beautiful gate. L. S. U.

GEMS.

By trying to kill calumny it is kept alive; leave it to itself and it will die a natural death.

STRIVE to make everybody happy and you will make at least one so—yourself.

WHEN Heaven sends storms upon men they must imitate the humble grass, which saves itself by meekly lying down.

It is said that every virtue has its counterpart, and so every vice. Take care they do not change places.

THE vanity of human life is like a river, constantly passing away, and yet constantly coming on.

It is one of the characters of a good man to dispense liberally and enjoy abstemiously the goods he knows he may lose and must leave.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

A SIMPLE REMEDY FOR DANDRIF.—There are doubtless few persons, especially among gentlemen, who do not suffer from the inconvenience of dandriff. Physicians seem to consider it not of sufficient importance to engage their attention, and the poor victims are left either to practise their virtue of endurance, or for a cure to try some of the many nostrums advertised in the public prints. The intolerable itching which frequently accompanies the

troublesome complaint is not the only unpleasant feature, as, to persons of any pretensions to neatness, the appearance of the white scales on the coat collar and shoulders is very objectionable. The writer, during a number of years, tried the different alcoholic solutions of castor oil and many other preparations without permanent benefit, and as a last resort was led to adopt the plan of cleansing the scalp with borax and carbonate of potassa. This proved effectual, but after a persistent treatment of some months the hair became sensibly thinner, and perhaps would have soon disappeared altogether. The belief that dandriff arises from a disease of the skin, although physicians do not seem to agree on this point, and the knowledge that the use of sulphur is frequently attended with very happy results in such diseases, induced me to try it in my own case. A preparation of one ounce flowers of sulphur and one quart of water was made. The clear liquid was poured off, after the mixture had been repeatedly agitated during intervals of a few hours, and the head was saturated with this every morning. In a few weeks every trace of dandriff had disappeared, the hair became soft and glossy, and now, after a discontinuance of the treatment for eighteen months, there is no indication of the return of the disease. I do not pretend to explain the *modus operandi* of the treatment, for it is well known that sublimed sulphur is almost or wholly insoluble, and the liquid used was destitute of taste, colour, or smell. The effect speaks for itself.—E.

STATISTICS.

VICTORIA.—The quarterly abstract shows that the births in the third quarter of 1870 were 3,828 males and 3,570 females; arrivals by sea, 4,482 males and 1,798 females; total, 13,678; deaths, 1,348 males and 866 females; departures by sea, 3,428 males and 1,315 females; total, 6,957. Increase during the quarter, 3,534 males and 3,187 females; total, 6,721. Population on the 30th of June, 1871, 403,699 males and 332,600 females; total, 736,298. Population on the 30th of September, 1871, 407,133 males and 335,796 females; total, 742,929. The population here stated has been brought on from the approximate returns of the census. When the exact results are known the total figures will, no doubt, be somewhat affected thereby.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE 1st of May in next year is fixed for the opening of the Vienna Exhibition.

A MUSICIAN in Edinburgh, who died a few months ago, has left musical instruments and money for the university of that city to the value of 3,000*l*. It is described as the Signor Theophile Bucher Legacy.

It is reported that the lieutenant-colonels for the new depot centres will receive 5*s*. a day as "command money," instead of the regimental allowance of 3*s*.

DESTRUCTIVE EARTHQUAKE IN ANTIOCH.—Half the town of Antioch was destroyed by an earthquake on the 3rd of April; 15,000 persons were killed. Great distress prevails in consequence.

BELL-RINGING.—Church bell-ringing is in future to be numbered among the accomplishments of Oxford undergraduates, a society for the practice of the difficult art having been recently formed at the university.

HER MAJESTY has graciously consented that models showing the original cutting of the Rob-in-noor, when first exhibited in 1851, and the subsequent recutting, shall be exhibited in the London Exhibition, 1872.

MILK ANALYSES.—According to statistics obtained by the *Milk Journal*, the appalling fact has been made public that up to the end of March last 1,168 samples of milk have been analyzed from various dairymen in London, and that only twenty-two honest dairymen have yet been discovered in the whole metropolis.

A LAND AND WATER BICYCLE.—Professor Brown has completed his bicycle by which he can travel upon land or water. He will very shortly make a trip from London to Paris, coming by road from London to Dover, and from Dover to France by water. He will be accompanied by two steamers, in case of accident, and visitors will be allowed to go on board.

PERUVIAN ANTIQUITIES.—King Victor Emanuel has presented to the Geological Museum of the University of Rome a collection of Peruvian antiquities—silver vases, curious musical instruments, a coloured garment made from the bark of trees, and arrows and lances. The articles were discovered in a guano bed, and are antiques. The lances are notched, ornamented with feathers, and have wooden heads, showing that they were made before iron was used.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. A. W.—The packet has been received, but a long time must elapse ere we shall be able to form any opinion upon its contents.

A. READER.—Ten years is a very long time to look forward to, as you seem to consider what may happen then an element in your qualification we can only advise you to wait until "opportunity" finds you out.

AUDACIOUS CHARLES.—Your epithet is perhaps not ill chosen considering the very early age at which you are anxious to incur matrimonial responsibilities. You must be prepared to encounter some scrutinizing inquiries from the Yorkshire ladies as to the powers of bread-winning you possess.

BELENDA M.—We can hardly understand how a young lady of the age of seventeen has an income of the amount named strictly at her own disposal. There must be, we think, some one in the nature of a guardian who has power over it; he should be consulted before the contemplated step is taken.

HERBERT M.—There is a slight and perhaps not unpromising vein of comic genius in the rhymes "Mary—the One I Love." The language is ludicrous enough, and what may be called the penultimate climax is as diverting as it is decisive. Whether a cultivation of the small ability therein developed would discover any gift of humour it is difficult to say.

CORNER ROSE.—Perhaps the best compliment to say (to use your own words) to a bride and bridegroom at a wedding-breakfast is the old-fashioned one of "God bless you." The tone of your voice and the expression of your countenance as you utter these words will depend upon your own heart's estimate of their importance, and the sincerity which attaches to your individuality.

A. L. H.—A well-written hymn will give you an idea of versification, although it is an original idea on your part to read hymns in order to learn how to write poetry. However, it is a good thing in more ways than one to commit hymns to memory. Perhaps the most popular hymn-book of the day is "Hymns—Ancient and Modern," which can be procured of a bookseller for a few pence.

ALBERT J.—There are phenomena constantly occurring in every-day life, and it becomes us all to speak respectfully and cautiously concerning the merits of each new rare article presented before us. Yet, of an individual who though under age is not only in business for himself but also in a first-class business yielding a net income of 400*l.* a year it is surely not disrespectful to say "Wonderful Man."

SPEER.—It is almost impossible to give an answer to such a very speculative question. We apprehend that you have no connections in either place, for, if you had, the locality of their residence should decide your choice. For a stranger Cheltenham may perhaps be considered a very exclusive town, and in Bath you would require a large capital. On the supposition that your capital, though of fair amount, is not really great, we think it just possible that the commercial city of Bristol may best suit your views.

A POOR ONE, W.—You write a very fair hand. Interest is not now absolutely necessary to obtain employment in the Civil Service. The competition is open. You should make personal application at the office of the Civil Service Commissioners in Cannon Row, Westminster. At the district and other post-offices there are, from time to time, exhibited notices stating the employments to which the Commissioners offer to youths, the amount of salary the latter can earn, and the appointed examination days.

EFFIE.—To form an opinion upon the very few particulars you have sent is difficult. What have you to say about temper, your favourite amusements, the colour of your hair and complexion, the nature and expression of your eyes, the description of your figure, the shape of your nose, the style of your ears, the form of the mouth, and, not to be too exacting, that crucial test of the physiognomist—the peculiarity of the chin? The men who jump at conclusions are few compared with those who cannot fall in love with a shadow.

F. W. FERR.—Through some inadvertence the recipe of which you have forwarded a copy is incomplete, the colouring matter, nitrate of silver, having been entirely omitted. We do not now recommend the use of this potent agent even in a diluted state, because in the hands of amateurs it is likely to subject them to great inconvenience. Of course in many things it will not do to let Dame Nature have her way, but in the case of hair-dyes an abstinence from their use can be recommended upon the ground of economy of time and money. The pardonable vanity which leads to their use is often wounded,

for a "dye" is sometimes discovered, and, when discovered, despised.

R. S.—We cannot say anything in commendation of the piece entitled "Minstrel Power." The other one headed "The Singer's Death" is good, pathetic, and pervaded by a high-toned poetical spirit; but its strains are singularly like some we have heard before. Wherever these latter verses came from they form a very marked contrast to the pieces you generally send; indeed nothing could help us better to explain our estimation of your usual shortcomings than a studied comparison of "The Singer's Death" with the efforts you ordinarily submit to our notice.

F. G.—We are afraid your second attempt will not do. Your fault seems to be either that you lack ability and strength to sustain the creditable production with which you commenced, or that you are not sufficiently industrious. Some improvement might have been made in your verses now under consideration, which are pervaded by a good and bright idea, by the exercise of a very little more care. Probably after all you might find that *le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*; still you should try your best or abstain from trying, remembering the old adage that "whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well."

CLAUDIA.—1. The name of the Prince of Wales's youngest living or second son is George Frederick Ernest Albert, who was born on 3rd June, 1865. 2. Your handwriting, though very plain, is not otherwise good. 3. The Christian name William is derived from the Saxon and signifies a protector or a guide to many. A very learned lady who has written a book on the meanings and derivations of Christian names says that William is a name which belonged with great appropriateness to the celebrated statesman, William Pitt, because he was "the pilot who weathered the storm." Harriet, although what is termed a diminutive, may be supposed to mean a woman of distinction.

BE CAREFUL! OH, MY SON!

You are going away from home, my son,
Be careful how you're led;
For we all must live—so the adage says—
As we have made our bed.

You carry away a boy's true heart,
And a strength through love attained;
Oh! bring us back in its place, my son,
A manhood all unstained.

You are going away from home and friends—
From a mother's loving care—
From a father's counsel wisely given—
From a hearth of praise and prayer!

Going away to the gay, bright scenes
That will fire your bounding heart—
That will tempt perhaps your untired feet
From the better way to part.

"Whatever we sow we shall reap," my son,
Be it grains or noxious weeds—
Be it laurel wreaths or cypress boughs.
Then scatter the goodly seeds! M. A. K.

C. E. K., thirty, tall, and handsome, wishes to marry a tall, dark young lady.

R. S., twenty-three, 5ft. 9in., would like to marry a lady about his own age, and good looking.

SWEET NELLIE, twenty-five, medium height, wants to marry a clerk about thirty.

ARIANNE G., twenty, fair, and pretty. Respondent must be about twenty-five, tall, and fond of home.

N. P. D., twenty-three, 5ft. 8in., fair, and domesticated. Respondent must be about thirty, rather tall, and an industrious mechanic.

BLUE EYES, twenty-six, tall, and accomplished. Respondent must be about twenty-nine, and handsome; a printer preferred.

S. K. M., thirty-one, 5ft. 3in., good looking, and loving. Respondent must be a steady young man about her own age.

ALICE K., twenty-one, tall, and domesticated, wishes to marry a young man about twenty-six, rather tall, and industrious.

CONSTANTINE L., twenty-four, 5ft. 4in., and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty-seven, fair, and have a little money.

F. P. S., twenty-two, medium height, gray eyes, brown hair, loving, and a domestic servant. Respondent must be dark, and able to keep a wife.

P. S. V., twenty-seven, moderately tall, very dark, and loving, wants to marry a young man about thirty, in the Navy.

MINNIE W., thirty, tall, dark hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, wishes to marry a tall young gentleman; money not so much an object as a good home.

ELIZABETH M., twenty-five, slim figure, dark hair and eyes, good looking, wishes to marry a tall, fair young man, in a good position, and fond of music.

A. S. C., nineteen, tall, dark, curly hair, good looking, wishes to marry a tall, dark young gentleman, who has sufficient money to keep a wife comfortably.

FAIRY, nineteen, pretty, accomplished, loving, would make a good wife to a loving husband, wishes to marry a gentleman in the Navy.

LOUISE A. F., twenty-nine, tall, good musician, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be about twenty-nine or thirty, and dark.

RUTH V., twenty-one, middle height, dark hair, light blue eyes, pretty, and fond of home. Respondent must be fair, tall, and good looking.

O. A. M., eighteen, handsome, tall, musical, and well connected, wishes to marry a musician who is tall and handsome.

TOM WHITTINGTON, thirty, tall, fair, good looking, and in receipt of a good income. Respondent must be not over thirty, medium height, dark, accomplished, and have a little money.

FOLLY RUSSELL, twenty-two, rather tall, very good looking, dark hair and eyes, passionately fond of music,

highly respectable, domesticated, and an amiable, affectionate girl. Respondent should be from twenty-two to twenty-seven, of gentlemanly appearance and manners, moderately tall, dark complexion, steady, and well educated.

MINSTREL, twenty-six, dark eyes, light hair, and very musical. Respondent must be dark, medium height, loving, and able to make a working man's home very comfortable.

H. M., twenty, medium height, brown hair and eyes, very good looking, a tradesman's daughter, loving disposition. Respondent must be tall and dark; a clerk in a good position preferred.

LITTLE ENDIE, twenty, dark hair and eyes, good looking, loving, and cheerful, can cook well, and manage a house, would like to marry a tall, dark, and good-tempered gentleman, not over thirty.

M. G. S., twenty-two, 5ft. 5in., fair complexion, blue eyes, and in receipt of a good salary. Respondent must be about nineteen, fair, lively, cheerful, able to sing and play the piano; money on her side no object.

JOX H., twenty-eight, 5ft. 11in., fair complexion, blue eyes, and loving disposition, in a good situation in the country. Respondent must be good looking, not over twenty-five, and of a loving disposition; one accomplished preferred.

AMANDA, twenty-three, 5ft. 5in., brown hair and eyes, fair complexion, good looking, good tempered, musical, and domesticated. Respondent must be of gentlemanly appearance, good tempered, fond of home and music, and able to make a wife comfortable.

LILLY C., twenty-two, of medium height, and rather dark, handsome, accomplished, very fond of music and the drama, and the daughter of parents in independent circumstances. Respondent must be about twenty-five, good looking, fond of music, and in receipt of a very good income; a tradesman preferred. "Lilly C." is very fond of children.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

TOM BOWLINE is responded to by—"Emma S.", twenty, dark complexion, dark hair and eyes, very fond of sailors, and thinks she would suit "Tom Bowline."

J. H. by—"Nellie V.", nineteen, 5ft. 7in., stout, good looking, dark hair, gray eyes, loving, and fond of home.

LOUIS H. by—"Alice", twenty, fair, well educated, domesticated, has some money, and has learned a business.

BUSINESS by—"Shamrock", nineteen, fair, medium height, fond of home, loving, and has a little money.

JAMES S. by—"Lego", twenty-four, 6ft., a professional man, blue eyes, light curly hair, and musical.

ROWLAND by—"Harriette C.", medium height, dark, loving, and fond of home.

EDWARD by—"W. G.", thirty-seven, a widow, dark hair and eyes, a loving heart, a little home, very industrious, two children—a boy and girl.

A. B. by—"Jacques", twenty-four, good looking, light complexion, dark brown hair, gray eyes, holds a very good position, and is a native of Southampton.

MOSCOW AND VIERON by—"Gertrude", twenty-two, tall, and fair; and "Lucia", nineteen, medium height; both highly respectable.

LIVERPOOL by—"Sunbeam", thirty, a widow, with one child and a good home; she is in a good social position, and has been accustomed to business all her life.

ALBERT W. by—"Hetty L.", who answers to what "Albert W." requires in a wife, as she is tall, good looking, fair, and has blue eyes.

LILLY by—"Boelia", twenty-four, 5ft. 4in., dark complexion, hazel eyes, fond of music, of a loving disposition, and a sailor.

SARAH G. by—"G. B.", 5ft. 8in., dark complexion, very fond of home, in regular employment in Government service, and thinks that "Sarah G." will suit him.

ARIANNE by—"Thomas B.", 5ft. 8in., fair complexion, brown hair, gray eyes, fond of home and music, and holds a very good situation.

SARAH SELL by—"Lofty", twenty-two, medium height, fair hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, loving, fond of home, and a sailor in the Navy.

LIZZIE F. by—"Hotspur", thirty-five, short, a steady workman earning 22*s.* per week, dark brown hair and beard, of a warm and loving nature, fond of home and books.

PHILIP by—"Annie", twenty-two, tall, fair, pretty blue eyes, accomplished, domesticated, loving heart, and fond of home.

HERBY C. by—"Jenny C.", twenty-two, dark hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, a domestic servant in a situation where she has been four years and a half; by—"Katie," a domestic servant, who would make a good wife, light brown hair, fair complexion, good tempered, and affectionate; and by—"Cathie," twenty, tall, brown hair, gray eyes, has been a domestic servant, very fond of music, and would try to make home happy.

A. B. C. writes to inform "Susan" that he is fond of home and loving, and thinks he would make her a good husband.

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